

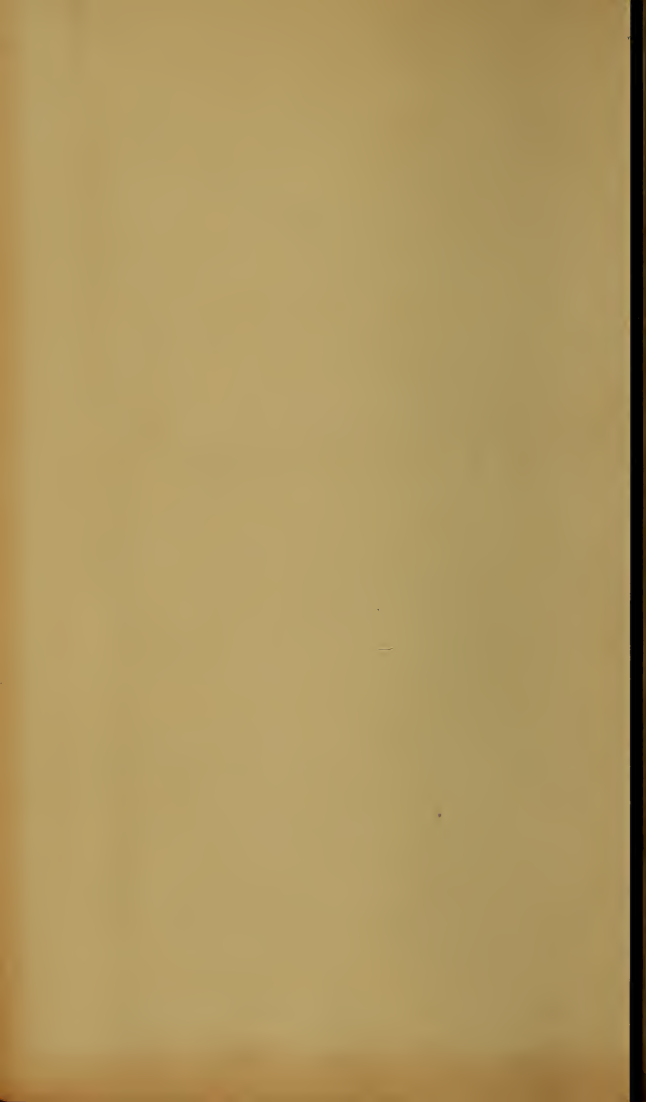




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THE GREAT

NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE

OF

PUBLIC PRAYER.

AND

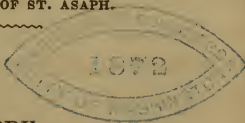
FREQUENT COMMUNION,

DESIGNED TO REVIVE

Primitive Piety.

~~~~~  
BY WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.,

LATE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.  
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## PREFACE.

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THE name of BISHOP BEVERIDGE is too well known in the English Church to need any formal introduction. Some of his smaller works have ever been held in so great esteem, that his eminent piety, as attested by them, lives in the affectionate remembrance of many, who have never learned to regard him in any character but that of a devotional writer. And this, without doubt, is as he would most earnestly have wished. He would have desired rather that his memory should be handed down among the names of those who died in faith, than that he should be invested with the learned dignity of a doctor in the Church. Yet the man who at the age of eighteen years composed a treatise on the excellence and use of the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Arabic, and Samaritan languages—in after life, the deeply learned work on the Canons of the Primitive Church, and also the compilation of Councils as received by the Greek Church, may well take a place in the first order of divines.\*

\* Synodicon sive Pandectæ Canonum SS. Apostolorum, et conciliorum ab Ecclesia Græca receptorum. Oxon : 1672.

The importance of recalling attention to this feature of Bishop Beveridge's character is very great. For in him we see a man of acknowledged eminence for piety and learning, bearing a broad and direct witness to the great catholic verities taught and practised by the English Church.

His judgment, therefore, is not that of a good man on whom for lack of learning we mistrustingly rely! nor of a learned man whom for lack of piety we follow with suspicion; but of a man in whom the habits of study and devotion were, through a long life, closely and inseparably interwoven.

The Treatises on Public Prayer and Frequent Communion, instructive as they must be at all times, become of a manifold importance at this day, when the cold practice of modern religious systems has established itself, even in serious minds, as the rule of Christ and his Apostles. The day must come, so at least we hope in faith, when men shall look back with amazement at their easy and contented acquiescence in the low condition to which the worship of God is fallen. If any past age had more of the talk of devotion on its lips, certainly none had less of its outward habits than the present. Passing over, for a moment, the breach of that great rule by which God's Church for nearly four thousand years has ordered its

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daily ministrations, it is surely strange, that in an age so loudly claiming to be religious, men should deem it enough to offer public worship to Almighty God once in seven days, and to show forth the Lord's death some four, six, or even twelve times a year. There must be something vicious at the root of this popular persuasion: some dullness in the moral sight that serious minds do not perceive by the keenness of intuition that as it is the duty of every redeemed soul, and of every Christian household, daily to worship God through Christ, so is it in like manner the duty of every several flock under its pastor, and of the whole united flock throughout the world, daily to worship God, the Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of Mankind. The daily prayers of a Christian man, of a Christian household, and of the Christian Church, have one common basis and obligation. No man is thought to be discharged from his private prayers because he attends the prayers of the household where he dwells: nor is the head of any family discharged from the duty of consecrating his household to God by daily united worship, because he prays himself in his private chamber: so neither do the public prayers of the Parish Church discharge any man from the duty of worshipping God both in his household and in private. Nor again, do these habits of daily devotion discharge any

Christian from the duty of worshipping God day by day in face of the Church, and in the fellowship of the flock of Christ. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matt. xxiii. 23.

But plain and visible as this duty is, there is still a truer and plainer way of stating it. It is by being made members of the Church of Christ, that we are made partakers of his redemption: it is the Church that is redeemed and we in it: it is the Church that is regenerated, and renewed, and kept through faith, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and we by being members of the Church partake of regeneration, renewal, and the grace of perseverance. To the Church is promised the presence of Christ unto the end of the world. To all the public assemblies of his Church, even to the smallest portion of that one body, is the pledge given, "where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The duty of worship therefore binds first the whole Church of Christ, and us as we are members of it. The worship of the Church is the great type and earnest of all particular and private devotions. It includes them, and they are developed out of it, as the action of each several member of the body is contained in the energy of the living man. It follows, therefore, that the private and family prayers of Christian men, so far

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from discharging them from the duty of public worship, are themselves no more than fragments of God's worship when detached from it. They are reflections of the daily public homage which the Church does to Almighty God. From this they are vitally derived, and into this they return again; even as we ourselves in all the things of a holy life serve God as members of that one great body, which in earth and heaven offers adoration day by day, "the incense of prayers breathed out of holy souls which is the sacrifice of saints."

It is wholly needless to offer, in this preface, any further proof of that which is so fully shown by Bishop Beveridge in these two Treatises, namely, that the Church catholic in all ages, and the Church of England to this day, contemplates and enjoins on all Christians the duty of daily worshipping God in common prayer. In one word it may be said that until the setting in of these latter times no Christian man ever gainsayed the duty. We have to contend against a two-fold opposition, for it is now not only neglected, but denied. It would be a painful and thankless task to trace out the falling away of men's hearts from God's public worship in the last hundred years. The coldness has stolen over us, and we know it not. Let the fact suffice, that about this time in the last century,



there were, in London, seventy-five churches open daily for common prayer: and in fourteen the holy Eucharist was administered every Sunday and festival.\*

How great a decline of private and family religion went before, and has followed after this visible falling away, we can hardly tell: but we may be sure that the chill of this decline must have been deeply and widely spread. We may well wake up with alarm, when we read what a Christian writer of the third century wrote of the last times. "The sanctuaries of God shall be as common dwellings: everywhere shall churches be overthrown: the Scriptures shall be despised; and men shall everywhere celebrate the impostures of the enemy."† "The churches shall lament with a great lamentation, because that neither oblation nor incense shall be celebrated, nor the service wherein God delights. But the consecrated shrines of churches shall be as a shed for summer fruits; and the precious body and blood of Christ shall not be seen in those days; the liturgy shall be extinguished; the chaunting of psalms shall cease; the reading of scriptures shall not

\* See a small Tract called, "*Pietas Londinensis*," an abridgment of Paterson's Ecclesiastical State of London in 1714. Burns, 1838.

† *De consummatione mundi*, ascribed to Hippolytus. S. vii.



be heard ; but there shall be darkness upon men, and lamentation upon lamentation, and wo upon wo.”\* This downward current has already set in upon the Church, and we ourselves have too far been carried along with it.

I may add a few words on the frequent administration of the holy Eucharist.

That the holy Eucharist was celebrated for four hundred years in some churches daily, in others three times a week, and in all churches every Lord's day, we have plain and abundant proof. St. Augustine says, “Some communicate every day in the body and blood of the Lord: others receive it on certain days: in other places on no day is the oblation omitted: in others it is made only on the Saturday and Sunday: in others on the Sunday alone.”† St. Chrysostom also calls the holy Eucharist “The daily sacrifice.”‡ “Consider,” he says, “I pray, the table of the King is made ready, and the angels minister, and the King is present . . . . He comes daily to see the guests.”§

Indeed, the public worship of Christian men was not thought complete without this holy Sacrament.

\* Ibid. xxxv.

† S. Aug: ad Jan: Ep: liv. 2.

‡ Hom. iii. in Ephes. 4. See Bingham's Antiq: b. xv. c. ix. 4.

§ Ibid. 5.

It was the visible symbol of the catholic faith, witnessing to the eyes of men the incarnation, the sacrifice, the crucifixion of the Son of God, and our incorporation with him, by a mysterious power, into one body; it was the retrospective symbol of propitiation, the visible pleading of Christ's blood-shedding, through which alone the prayers and intercessions of the Church were offered; it was the type and the test of unity among baptized men; and it was the sign and witness of our watching for His second advent; showing forth the Lord's death till he come.

How far the Socinian heresy which denies the Godhead and sacrifice of Christ, and the presence and being of the Holy Ghost; how far the low unspiritual religion of these latter days which counts the rending of Christ's visible Church a light or doubtful sin, and the expectation of Christ's coming a distempered fancy, be the easy and natural consequences of an infrequent and negligent administration of the Holy Eucharist, the fixed and visible witness of these great mysteries, may be left to the thoughtful Christian to decide. It is enough to say that these heresies are dominant where the Eucharist is most neglected: and that they are repressed, if not absolutely expelled, wherever it is duly honored. Who can doubt that purity, and unity of doctrine on the great mysteries of the catholic faith,

have been preserved in the English Church by the prominence she has given to her liturgy for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist? As she closes up her several prayers and intercessions by pleading in words the merits of our Redeemer, so she fulfils the entire offering of her solemn service by the action which He himself commanded in memory of his death and sacrifice.

It is possible that there may arise, in some thoughtful and religious minds, misgivings as to the effect of frequently receiving the Holy Communion. The following suggestions are therefore added, in the hope they may gradually remove any doubt or scruple.

Is it not certain that the earlier ages of Christianity were the purest, and that the administration of the holy Eucharist was then most frequent?

Is it not true, that the effect of constant habit in religion is to confirm and deepen the religious character? Who, for instance, would advise any man to go to church less often, say once a fortnight—or pray in private less frequently, say once instead of twice a day, for fear that frequency should diminish reverence and induce familiarity? Why then should frequent Communion lessen our reverence? Or, rather, how can infrequent Communion fail to produce the same lowering effect as infrequent attendance at Church, or infrequent prayer in private?

But is not the Holy Communion a Sacrament of grace ? And will not that grace not only preserve the minds of true Christians from the irreverence of familiarity, but also sanctify, and perfect the mind of Christ in the faithful man ?

Is not the man that often partakes of it made thereby more meet to partake of it again ? Does it not deepen and establish both faith and penitence, the very habits of mind which it requires as conditions to the worthy receiving ?

Let any sincere Christian make the trial. Let him trust himself to follow the steps of the early Saints and Martyrs of our Lord. Frequent Communion did not dull their keen sense of holy things, neither shall it dull ours. Let the broad rule and order of the catholic Church outweigh his misgivings ; and, after the trial made, let him ask of himself whether he has detected the ill consequences of which he was afraid, and if so whether the disturbing cause is to be found anywhere but in himself.

But, because these Treatises may fall into the hands of those who are engaged with the oversight of a flock, it may be as well to add from one of Bishop Beveridge's other works, a testimony drawn from his own practice to the rule he has laid down.

“ Ye live in a Church so truly apostolical, that she

hath taken care that this holy sacrament may be administered, as it was in the Apostles' days, at least every Lord's day, and also every Holy-day in the year. And where there are a sufficient number of communicants in any parish, the Minister cannot refuse to give it them whensoever they desire it: and I hope there is never a Minister in the diocese, but would be more ready to administer than his people can be to receive it. In the place where I had the honor to serve God at His altar, before He called me hither, I administered it every Lord's day, for above twenty years together, and was so far from ever wanting communicants that I had always as many as I and two Curates could well administer it to them: for people found such extraordinary benefit, and ghostly comfort from it, that they never thought they could receive it often enough; and the oftener they received it, the more they still desired it: many never omitting it if they could possibly come to it; whereby they became the great ornaments of our holy religion, such as the first converts were: and such ye may all be, if you would but take the same course for it. . .”\*

Does not experience show, that the number of communicants is always greatest where the Holy Com-

\* Bishop Beveridge's sermon on the Exemplary Holiness of the Primitive Christians. Works, vol. v. p. 9. 10. Oxford, 1818.

munion is oftenest, and least where it is seldomest administered ?

To the objection, There would not be enough communicants for a weekly Communion, the answer is there are not, because the weekly Communion is neglected. What is this objection but pleading the ill effects of our own low practice as an excuse for not correcting the evil from which they flow? Weekly Communion gathers and multiplies its own attendants. Let the Church faithfully give both the bidding and the warning, and the Lord will provide himself guests for his own supper.

May these Treatises fulfil the purpose for which they were written, and stir us up to seek with our whole heart a more habitual fellowship with Christ our unseen Head, and a more complete oneness of spirit with the members of His mystical body in all the earth.

H. E. M.

Lavington,  
July 10th, 1844.

THE  
GREAT NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE  
OF  
Public Prayer.





THE  
GREAT NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE  
OF  
PUBLIC PRAYER.

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ACTS III. 1.

Now Peter and John went up together into the Temple, at the Hour of Prayer, being the Ninth Hour.

FROM your presence here at this time and place, dedicated to the service of the Most High God, I cannot but in charity conclude, that you all believe that he governs the world, and disposes of all things in it, according to his own will and pleasure. That it is in him you live and move, and have your being; that you neither have, nor can have anything but what you receive from him, and that you are therefore come hither now, on purpose to acknowledge his goodness to you in what you have, and to pray unto him for what ye want. And verily

ye do well to take all the opportunities that ye can get to do so ; for this is the way to continue in his love and favor, and to live always under his care and protection. But for that purpose ye must not think it enough to pray to and to praise him only now and then, when ye have nothing else to do ; but this should be your daily business, the constant employment of your lives. He himself commands you by his Apostle, *To Pray without ceasing*, 1 Thes. v. 17, and to *Pray always, or at all times, with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit and to watch thereunto with all perseverance*, Eph. vi. 18. Not as if ye should do nothing else but pray ; but that prayer should run through and accompany everything else ye do, so as to begin, continue and end all your actions with praying to and praising God for his direction and assistance ; though not always with your mouths, yet howsoever in your hearts, by lifting them up unto him, as any man may do, in midst of other business. Thus *David* praised God seven times a day. *Seven*

*times a day do I praise thee, saith he, because of thy righteous judgments, Psal. cxix. 164. Not that he never did it oftener, but this was the least he ever did it. For being a man after God's own heart, his heart was always running upon God, and praying to him; and that too not only in his mind, but with his mouth also. I will bless the Lord, saith he, at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth, Psal. xxxiv. 1. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long, xxxv. 28. Thus all that would live a truly pious and divine life, must keep their hearts always fixed upon God, admiring his goodness, magnifying his power, and imploring his grace and mercy, not only every day but every hour of the day, at all times, upon all occasions that offer themselves, as some or other do continually.*

But besides our thus praying to and praising God in the midst of other business, we ought to set apart certain times in every day, wholly for this. The saints of old were wont to do it

three times a day, as we learn from *Daniel*.— For when king *Darius* had signed the decree, *That whosoever should ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, except of the King, should be cast into the den of lions*, it is written, *That, when Daniel knew that the decree was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God, as he did aforetime*, Dan. vi. 10. *As he did aforetime*; which shows that this had been his constant practice before, and he would not leave it off now, though he was sure to be cast into the den of lions for it. But what times of the day these were, which were anciently devoted to this religious purpose, we may best gather from king *David*, where he saith, *Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice*, Psal. lv. 17. He begins with the evening, because day then began, according to the *Jewish* account: but he observed

all these times of prayer alike. And so questionless did other devout people as well as he. The *Jews* have a tradition that those times were ordained to that use, the morning by *Abraham*, noon by *Isaac*, and evening by *Jacob*. But whether they have any ground for that or no, be sure this custom is so reasonable and pious, that the Church of Christ took it up and observed it all along from the very beginning. Only to distinguish these times more exactly, the Christians called them (as the *Jews* also had done before) by the names of the third, sixth, and the ninth hours. Of which *Tertullian* saith, *tres istas horas ut insigniores in rebus humanis, —ita et solenniores fuisse in orationibus divinis*, as they were more famous than others in human affairs, so they were more solemn in divine prayers. *Tertull. de Jejun. c. 10.*

I know the primitive Christians performed their private devotions at other times as well as these ; but at these set times every day, especially at the third and ninth hours, they always

performed them publicly, if they could get an opportunity. And if we would be such Christians as they were, we must follow their pious example in this as well as in other things. This therefore is that, which by God's assistance, I would persuade you all to, and for that purpose have chosen these words for the subject of my present discourse, as setting before you the example of two of Christ's own apostles in it, *St. Peter* and *St. John*, of whom it is here said, *That they went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

The Holy Spirit of God by his amanuensis, *St. Luke*, is here about to describe a great miracle wrought upon a man who was above forty years old, and had been lame from his mother's womb, whom *St. Peter* made perfectly sound and whole, only by saying, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.* And he begins it with telling us *that Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer.* But what is this to the purpose?

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Would it not have been sufficient to have described this as he usually doth other miracles, without such minute circumstances of time and place? Yes, certainly, it would have been so. And therefore I can see no reason why this should be recorded, but only to teach us, that though the *Levitical* law expired together with our Saviour, yet the public worship of God ought still to be kept up at certain times and places, set apart for it. For here we see two great Apostles, the one called the first, the other the *beloved* Disciple? these two, when endued with a more than ordinary measure of the Holy Ghost, did not think it enough to pray at home, or together with their brethren in any private house; but they went to the place that was dedicated to the public worship of God, and at the time when that worship was then performed. And this is left upon record that Christians of all ages may know it, and learn, by their apostolical example, to lay hold on all opportunities they can get of performing their



public devotions to Almighty God in such places and at such times as are appointed for that purpose.

For our better understanding of this, we shall consider two things: First, the place whither these apostles went, they went up to the temple: and then the time when, they went *at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*

First, they went up into the temple, εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, to the holy place, as the word signifies, to the place dedicated to holy uses, to the service of the most holy God. Such places God always had upon earth, and he always looked upon them as his own in a peculiar manner. Though *the earth be the Lord's, and the fulness thereof,* or everything that is in it: Yet when any part of it is solemnly devoted to him, and to the worship of his holy Name, he takes possession of it for himself, as he did in a visible manner, both of the tabernacle and the temple.

And, from that time forward, he hath a new kind of propriety in such places distinct from



that which he had before, and reckons them his own in a more special sense than other places are. He himself, as well as others, calls them his; as where he saith, *In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcized in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house*, Ezek. xliv. 7. *My house shall be called an house of prayer*, Isai. lvi. 7, and so he frequently saith, *That this house was called by his name, or his name was called upon in it*, as Jer. vii. 10, xi. 14. And in all places, thus dedicated to him, and called by his name, he himself hath promised that he will be present in a special manner to bestow his blessings upon those who there sincerely call upon him. *In all places, where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*, Exod. xx. 24. The truth of which promise, God's faithful people have had experience of in all ages: and therefore always accounted it to their interest as well as duty to frequent such places as often as they could. As we see in *David*, a man after

God's own heart. What pleasure did he take in going to the house of God? *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord*, Psal. cxxii. 1. How happy did he esteem those who could be always there? *Blessed is the man*, saith he to God, *whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts, he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple*. Psal. lxxv. 4. How doth he long to communicate with them in it! *How amiable*, saith he, *are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh cryeth out for the living God*, Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. How doth he envy the very birds that come into the house of God, when he himself, being then in exile, could not; *Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God*, v. 3. How doth he prefer this before all the pleasures of

the world besides; *For a day in thy courts, saith he, is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, v. 10.* There are many such places in the *Psalms* which show the great love and honor he had for the house of God, and the extraordinary comfort and delight that he used to find there.

Thus also *Daniel*, when he was at *Babylon*, although the house of God was then destroyed and not yet rebuilt, yet in his daily devotions *he opened the windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem, Dan. vi. 10,* that he might look at least towards the place where the house of God once stood, and so expressed his earnest desire to worship God there, and his faith in the promises which God had made to those who did so, and by that means, when he could not possibly do it any other way, he made his private devotions in a manner public, joining in his soul with the whole Church of God in his public worship when he could not do it in his body.

But not to mention any more of the many instances of this kind in the Old Testament, in the New it is written, *That Anna the Prophetess departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day*, Luke ii. 37. It is written, *That old Simeon, that just and devout man, came by the Spirit into the temple*, v. 27. It is written, *That Jesus himself went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying unto them, It is written, my house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple*, Luke xix. 45, 46, 47. It is written of the apostles, *That when they had seen Christ ascend to Heaven, they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God*, Luke xxiv. 52, 53. It is written of all the disciples, *That they continuing daily in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, prais-*

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*ing God and having favor with all the people, Acts ii. 46, 47. It is written particularly of St. Paul, That when he was come to Jerusalem, even while he was praying in the temple, he was in a trance, Acts xxii. 17. And it is written here of St. Peter and St. John, That they went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer.*

But wherefore are these things written, but for our admonition ; to teach us that it is God's will and pleasure that we should perform public devotions to him, in places dedicated to his service, and set apart wholly for that purpose ? Such as the temple was at *Jerusalem*, which therefore was called *a house of prayer by God himself*, Isa. lvi. 7. Luke xix. 46. *Yea, his house of prayer. And I will make them joyful*, saith he, *in my house of prayer*, Isa. lvi. 7, which plainly shows both that prayer was the most proper work of that house, and also that house the most proper place for prayer ; as being his own house, where he himself was

pleased in a more especial manner to reside, and to distribute his blessings among those who there prayed unto him for them. *Hence, whatsoever was done in this house, is said to be done before God, as there specially present, Eccl. v. 1, 2. Jer. vii. 10, &c., and when our blessed Lord in his infancy was first brought to the temple, it is said, They brought him thither to present him to the Lord, Luke ii. 22.* Where we may observe by the way that this one place of Scripture duly considered, would be sufficient to persuade all Christian parents to have their children baptized, not in their own but in God's house, that they may be there presented to the Lord, as Christ was, and so receive his blessing, according to the prayers which are there made for them in God's own house, in his house of prayer, *where he himself hath promised to meet with them, and to bless them, Exod. xx. 24.* By virtue of which promise the people of God in all ages have found their common and public prayers to be the most effectual.



There they have greater assistances of God's Holy Spirit, stronger assurances of his love and favor to them, a clearer sight of his glory and goodness, and a deeper sense of his special presence with them, grounded upon their belief of that remarkable saying of our blessed Saviour, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, Matthew xviii. 20. He doth not only promise that he will be there, but he positively asserts, that he will be there in the midst of them; which they who meet together in his name, cannot but believe, with such a faith, *as is the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1, and therefore by it, they see him there, as really as they see themselves, or one another. And this is that which makes them so desirous of being in such places, as we see in David, saying, *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth after thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as*

*I have seen thee in the sanctuary*, Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2. It seems, he had seen God in the sanctuary, or holy place, and therefore longs to go thither again, not doubting but if he was there, he should see God again as he used to do. And so do all his faithful people. They see him there by faith in his word ; they see him by the light of his countenance, which he lifts up there upon them. They see him shining forth in his glory, and manifesting himself and his goodness to them in hearing the prayers, and accepting the praises they offer to him in his name, who is in the midst of them, and hath promised, that *whatsoever they shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it*. John xvi. 23.

These things, I confess, may seem strange to some, especially to such as have not made trial of them ; but they, who have accustomed themselves to perform their public devotions to Almighty God, with that intention of mind, with that earnestness of desire, with that faith, with



that reverence and humility as they ought ; they know that all which I have said comes far short of what they sometimes experience. Be sure, it was not for nothing, that the apostles in my text, went up to the *temple at the hour of prayer* to pray there ; as all devout people that dwelt thereabout were wont to do. And they also that would but seem to be so ; as appears from our Saviour's parable, where he saith, *two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican*, Luke xviii. 10. For this shows, that not only they, but Christ himself, esteemed that the most proper place for prayer.

I say the most, not the only proper place. It was at the temple only, that all the sacrifices were offered, which typified and represented the death of Christ, by whom alone our prayers are heard, and our duties accepted. And therefore, that was the most proper place for all that lived near it, and could go thither, to perform their daily devotions, because there they had the

most sensible occasions given for the exercise of their faith in Christ, there typically represented before their eyes, as dying for their sins, and as making intercession for them, with the incense of his own merits. But, nevertheless, there were many other places appointed for public prayers, which were called synagogues. There were reckoned at one time, above four hundred in *Jerusalem* itself, and several others in every city of *Judea*, and wheresoever else any Jews dwelt ; so that in every place where there were ten considerable Jews together, they were bound to have a synagogue ; which were therefore as so many parish churches, belonging to the temple, as the cathedral ; or rather they were as our chapels of ease, to the mother church. For as there are many parishes in England, where there are several chapels of ease, where people may perform their public prayers, but they are bound to go to the mother-church to receive the Holy Sacrament. So notwithstanding the many Synagogues which

they had in all the parts of their kingdom, the Jews were to offer their sacrifices only at the temple. And therefore, that was properly the metropolitical, or mother-church : and all the synagogues, far and near, were members of that, and as such, were Houses of God, and Houses of Prayer, as that was. And the prayers which were made in them, were as acceptable to God, as those which were made in the temple itself.

There were such places as these in *David's* time : For he, speaking prophetically of the destruction of that nation, saith, *They have burnt up all the synagogues, or Houses of God, in the land*, Psal. lxxiv. 8.

To the same purpose is that of the prophet *Jeremiah*, *He hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were a garden ; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly*, Lam. ii. 6. In both which places, we see God's propriety asserted in these synagogues, as well as in the temple. They are called the Houses of God, and his places of assembly. The original word

in both places is the same that is used for the tabernacle of the congregation, or the tabernacle of meeting, as the word signifies, so called, not only because the people met there, but chiefly because God met there with the people, as God himself assures us ; saying, *In the tabernacle of the congregation, or meeting, where I will meet with thee*, Exod. xxx. 36, vid. chap. xxv. 22, chap. xxix. 42. From whence it appears, that these synagogues also, as called by the same name, were places where God met with his people, and bestowed his blessings upon them. And that is the reason, that the Prophets complain so much of this, as one of the greatest calamities that could befall a nation, that the Houses of God should be burned and destroyed ; so that they had no such public and solemn places left, where they could meet with him. Hence also it was, that the *Jews* esteemed the building a synagogue, to be so good a work, and so great a kindness to them, as appears from their elders commending the *Centurion* to

our Saviour, as a person worthy of his favor upon that account ; for, say they, *he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue*, Luke vii. 5. And hence lastly it is, that we so often read in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, that Christ himself and his Apostles went as constantly into the synagogues, when they were in the country, as they went to the temple, when they were at *Jerusalem*. Those being the most proper places, not only for prayer, but likewise for the preaching and hearing God's holy word, which was *read in the synagogues, every Sabbath Day*, Acts xv. 21.

These things I thought good to put you in mind of at this time, that you might know how great a value the church and people of God, in ancient times, set upon places devoted to him, and might learn thence to do so too : for our churches now are as solemnly dedicated to the service of God, and therefore are as much his houses, his houses of prayer, as ever the Jewish synagogues were, or the temple itself. The

very name church in Greek, from whence it comes, signifies *the Lord's House*. And it cannot be imagined by any Christian, but that God hath as much propriety in, and as much respect unto, his houses now as he ever had. It is true, we have not such sacrifices offered in our churches, as were in the temple ; but we have one which answers the ends of all these sacrifices, and far exceeds them all together, even the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, instituted and celebrated in memory of the death of the Lamb of God, which by the legal sacrifices was only fore-showed and typified. And whereas then sacrifices were offered only in one place, at the temple in *Jerusalem*, not in any of their synagogues. The holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood is administered not only in our cathedrals, but in all our parish churches. And it being only by virtue of that blood which was only *typified* in theirs, but is *commemorated* in our churches, that our prayers are heard, our services accepted, or any of God's promises

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are ever fulfilled to us ; we cannot doubt but that all the promises which he made of meeting and blessing his people in such places, were intended for, and belong to us and to our churches, as much as ever they did to any : and by consequence that it is both our duty and interest to go to our respective churches as the two great Apostles did to the temple at the hour of prayer.

And that is the other thing which I promised to consider in these words, the time when these Apostles went up together into the temple, they went at *the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour* : that is, at three o'clock in the afternoon : For the *Jews* divided the day from sun-rising to sun-setting into *twelve hours*, John xi. 9, and therefore, according to their account, the time of the sun's rising about six o'clock was their first hour : their third hour was our nine o'clock in the morning : and their ninth, our third in the afternoon. And these two last, even the third and the ninth hours, or according to our ac-



count nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, were their constant hours of prayer every day in the year. But to understand how they came to be so, we must first observe, that in the old law, God commanded two Lambs to be offered upon the altar every day as a continual burnt-offering: *The one Lamb*, saith he, *thou shalt offer in the morning, and the other Lamb thou shalt offer at evening*, *Exod. xxix. 39, Numb. xxviii. 4*, or as it is in the Hebrew, between the two evenings, or about the midst between noon and sun-set, which was according to their reckoning the ninth hour. This we may learn from *Josephus*, the best Jewish writer that is extant, where he saith that the solemn sacrifices were offered twice a day, *πρωτὶ τε καὶ περὶ ἑνατην ὥραν*, in the morning, *Josephus Antiq. l. 14. c. 8*. And so the *Talmudists* tell us, that the daily evening sacrifice was killed at half an hour past eight, and offered upon the altar after nine. These, therefore, were the two set hours for the continual burnt offerings



every day, three in the morning, which is our nine, and nine, which is our three in the afternoon.

These two hours being appointed by God himself for the daily sacrifice, there was doubtless great reason for it, which seems to be this: these, as all the bloody sacrifices, were offered up only as types and representatives of that grand sacrifice which Christ, the Lamb of God, was to offer for the sins of the world: and therefore they were appointed at the same hours wherein his death was begun, as I may so speak, and finished. About the third hour, or nine in the morning, he was delivered to *Pilate*, accused, examined and condemned to die, and therefore the morning sacrifice was appointed at that hour. About the sixth hour, or noon, this Lamb of God was laid upon the altar of the cross, and at the ninth hour expired; as we learn from St. Matthew, saying, "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour: and

about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, Lama sabacthani, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ! and having cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost," Matt. xxvii. 45, 46, 50. And this I verily believe was the reason that the evening sacrifice every day was appointed to be offered up at the ninth hour, that so the very time of Christ's suffering might be fore-shown and typified by it, as the place also was ; it being absolutely forbidden to offer up any such sacrifices after the temple was built, anywhere else but only at *Jerusalem* where Christ was to suffer.

Now to bring this nearer to our present purpose, we must further observe, that in all these continual burnt-offerings, when the Lamb was laid upon the altar, a priest with a censer took some of the coals from off that altar, and carried them into the holy place, where he put incense upon them, and so offered it upon the golden altar before the veil, made for that purpose. This took up some considerable time,

usually about half an hour : all which time the people were at their devotions, worshipping, and praying and praising God ; as appears from St. *Luke* himself, who, speaking of *Zacharias*, the father of St. *John* the Baptist, saying, *According to the custom of the Priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense,* Luke i. 9, 10. This, therefore, was their time of prayer : And it was the most proper time that could be for it, while the Lamb was burning upon the altar without, as a type of the death of Christ, and the sweet incense was burning within the holy place, upon coals taken from thence, to put them in mind of his intercession which he makes by virtue of that death he suffered for them, that their prayers might be heard, and their services accepted before God. All which was represented in a vision to St. *John*, when he saw seven Angels which stood before God : and another Angel (which was Christ

the Mediator) *came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all Saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the Saints, ascended up before God out of the Angel's hand, Rev. viii. 3, 4.*

For hereby is plainly signified, that God smells a sweet savor in the prayers of his people, or accepts of them, only upon the account of the merits of the death of Jesus Christ, the Angel of the covenant, and by means of his mediation for them, typified by the sweet incense burning upon coals taken from the altar whereupon the Lamb was offered, at the same time that the people were at their devotions, and so ascending up together with them into Heaven, and there rendering them acceptable unto God. The same is intimated also by St. *Peter*, where speaking to the saints of God, he saith, *Ye also as lively stones are built up a*

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*spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Whereas our prayers and the other services which we perform to him, are called sacrifices, in allusion to, but spiritual, to distinguish them from, those under the law ; so they are said to be acceptable to God, not in themselves, but by Jesus Christ : by Jesus Christ perfuming them with the spiritual incense of his own merits, and so making them a sweet savor to the Lord, as it was typically expressed in the law, Lev. i. 9, &c.

By this, therefore, we may see how the third and ninth hours of the day, or as we speak, nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, came to be their chief set hours for prayer every day ; even because at these hours the daily sacrifices were offered, and the holy incense burnt, as types of Christ's death and intercession, whereby alone their prayers could go up as a memorial before God, and be well-pleasing to him. For this cause, therefore, these were

their constant hours of prayer, not only at the temple in *Jerusalem*, but in their synagogues also all the country over, devout people daily resorting thither at the said hours to perform their devotions, that so they might both keep up their communion with the Church at *Jerusalem*, and likewise communicate in the sacrifices and incense, which were there offered at these hours, or rather in what was signified by them for God's acceptance of what they did. But they who dwell at *Jerusalem*, usually went to the temple itself, at the foresaid hours. And that is the reason that there were *so many gathered together there upon the day of Pentecost, at the third hour of the day*, as *St. Peter* saith, Acts ii. 15. *That three thousand of them were converted to the faith of Christ*, Acts. ii. 41. *And there were as many or more there at the ninth hour*, when *St. Peter* and *St. John* went thither together, as appears in that *there were above five thousand at that time converted*, Acts iv. 4.

But how many soever were there besides, be



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sure these two great Apostles went together *into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour* : not now out of any respect to the sacrifices which were still continued to be offered by the unbelieving *Jews*. For the Apostles knew well enough, that all the laws about them expired upon the death of Christ.

So that now all such sacrifices could signify nothing at all. But they went to the temple, as it was a house of prayer, and a duty that always was and always must be performed unto God. *And they went at the ninth hour, because it was the hour of prayer.* It had been so for many ages, and there was no reason why it should be now laid aside, God himself had appointed it for the time of the evening sacrifice, because Christ, the grand sacrifice of the world, was to be offered up at that time. And though the virtue of the legal sacrifice was now ceased, yet the reason why that time was appointed for it still continued. There being as much reason why Christ's death should be

commemorated by our Christian sacrifice, as there was that it should be foreshown and typified by the legal, about the time it happened. At least, there was no reason to the contrary. And therefore, that being the usual time for public prayers in the place where they then were, they went up together into the temple at that hour to perform their devotions. And it is left upon record that they did so, as I observed before, on purpose that the Church, in all ages, might learn by their example to set apart some certain times every day in the year for public prayer. And accordingly as the *Jewish* church had, by God's own appointment, the morning and evening sacrifice every day in the year: so all Christian churches have been used to have their morning and evening prayers publicly performed every day. As might easily be shown out of the records of the church from the beginning of Christianity.

Not to insist upon other churches, I shall instance at present only in our own, which, as



in all things else, so particularly in this, is exactly conformable to the Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the first book of common prayer made by our church at the beginning of the Reformation, there was a form composed both for morning and evening prayer; the title for that of the morning ran thus, *An order for Matins daily through the year*; and of that for the evening, *An order for Even-song throughout the year*; and accordingly there were psalms and chapters appointed both for the morning and evening of every day. About three or four years after, the same book was revised and put forth again. And then the church taking notice that daily prayers had been in some places neglected, at the end of the preface she added two new rules, or, as we may call them, *Rubricks*, which are still in force, as ye may see in the common prayer-books which we now use.

The first is this :

*And all Priests and Deacons are to say daily*

*the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or other urgent cause.*

By this every one that is admitted into holy orders, although he be neither Parson, Vicar, nor Curate of any particular place, yet he is bound to say both morning and evening prayer every day, either in some church or chapel where he can get leave to do it, or else in the house where he dwells, except he be hindered by some such cause which the ordinary of the place judges to be reasonable and urgent.

The other order is this :

*And the Curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto, a convenient time before he begin, that people may come to hear God's word and pray with him.*

Here we have a plain and express command, that the Curate, whether he be the incumbent himself, or another procured by him to do it ; whosoever it is that ministereth God's holy word and sacraments in any parish church or chapel in *England*, shall say the same morning and evening prayer daily in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall take care that a bell be tolled a convenient time before he begins, that people having notice of it may come to God's house to hear his holy word read, and to join with the Minister in performing their public devotions to him. This every Minister or Curate in *England* is bound to do every day in the year, if he be at home, and be not otherwise reasonably hindered. And whether any hindrance be reasonable or no, the Minister himself is not the ordinary judge : for in all such cases that is referred by the common laws of the church to the Bishop of the diocese, or the ordinary of the place where he ministereth.

The law hath made this the duty of every Minister, and the Bishop or Ordinary is to see he doth it ; and whether any have reasonable cause ever to omit it, or whether the cause they pretend for it, be reasonable or no. This is left by the law to him. He may allow or disallow of the pretence as he upon the full hearing of it sees good : and may punish with the censures of the Church any Minister within his jurisdiction that doth not read the prayers of the Church, or take care they be read, every morning and evening in the year, except at such times when the Minister can prove that he had such a reasonable hindrance or impediment as will justify him before God and the Church.

This care hath our Church taken, that public prayers be read every morning and evening throughout the year in every parish within her bounds, that all who live in her communion, may, after the example of the Apostles in my text, go every day into the temple or church

*at the hour of prayer.* She hath not appointed the hour when either morning or evening prayer shall begin: because the same hour might not be so convenient in all places: so that in some places it might be pretended that there was a reasonable hindrance, that it could not be done just at the time. Wherefore to prevent any such plea, and to make the duty as easy and practicable, both to the Minister and the people, as it could be, the Church hath left that to the Ministers themselves, who considering every one his own and his people's circumstances, may and ought to appoint such hours, both for morning and evening prayer in their respective places, as they in their discretion shall judge to be most convenient. Only they ought to take care in general that morning prayers be always read before, and the evening after noon. And it is very expedient, that the same hours be every day, as much as it is possible, observed in the same place, that people knowing it beforehand, may order their

affairs so as to be ready to go to the church at the hour of prayer.

But notwithstanding this great care that our Church hath taken to have daily prayers in every parish, we see by sad experience they are shamefully neglected all the kingdom over; there being very few places where they have any public prayers upon the week days, except perhaps upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, because it is expressly commanded that the *Litany* be read upon those days; but it is as expressly commanded that both *Morning* and *Evening Prayers* be read every day in the week, as the *Litany* upon those. And why this commandment should be neglected more than the other, for my part I can see no reason. But I can see plain enough that it is a great fault, a plain breach of the known laws of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and particularly of that part of it which by his blessing is settled among us. But where doth this fault lie? I hope not in the *Clergy*. For I dare not suppose or



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imagine, but that every Minister in *England*, that hath the care of souls committed to him, would be willing and glad to read the prayers every day, for their edification, if the people could be persuaded to come to them. I am sure there is never a minister but is obliged to read them daily ; and never a parish in *England* but where the people may have them so read, if they will ; for they may require it by the laws both of our Church and State, except at such times when their minister is reasonably hindered from the execution of his office in the sense before explained.

But the mischief is, men cannot, or rather will not, be persuaded to it. They think it a great matter to come to Church upon the Lord's day, when they cannot openly follow their particular callings if they would. Upon other days they have other business to mind, of greater consequence, as they think, than going to prayers. To some it is a great disturbance to hear the bell sounding in their ears, and

calling them to their duty, which they being resolved not to practise, it makes them very uneasy to be so often put in mind of it. Others can make a shift to bear that pretty well, as not looking upon themselves as concerned in it. For they take it for granted that prayers were intended only for such as have nothing else to do. As for their parts, they have a great deal of work upon their hands, and must mind that without troubling their heads about anything else. This is the plain case of some; but not of all. Blessed be God he hath opened the eyes of many, especially in this city, who now see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, and therefore are as constant at their public devotions, as they are at their private business. And I trust in his infinite goodness and mercy, that he who hath begun so good a work among us, will one day perfect it, that we may all meet together with one heart and with one mouth to pray unto him, and praise and glorify his great name every



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day in the week, both in this city, and all the kingdom over. What a happy city, what a glorious kingdom, would it then be? And how happy should I think myself if it should please God to make me, the unworthiest of all his servants, an instrument in his almighty hand towards the effecting of it in this place? It is too great a felicity for me to flatter myself with the least hopes of. Howsoever I must do my duty, and leave the issue to him who hath the hearts of all men in his hand. And therefore in his name shall lay some such plan and obvious considerations before you, which I hope, by his blessing, may prevail upon all here present to follow the holy Apostles in my text, *in going together into the house of God at the hour of prayer.*

For this purpose I might first show the excellency and usefulness of the prayers which our Church hath appointed to be read every *Morning and Evening*. But having already offered something towards that upon another

occasion, I shall here only premise in general, that they are such, both for the language, the matter, the method, and the manner of performing them, that, to speak with the least, there never was, that we know of, nor is at this day, a better or more proper form of public devotions prescribed and used in any part of Christ's Church militant here upon earth: there being nothing wanting in them, that can any way conduce to the ends for which they are designed even to the setting forth of God's glory and to the edifying of his people. There we confess our sins to God, and have his pardon and absolution of them declared to us, being penitent, by one of his own Ministers. There we praise and magnify his glorious name in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. There we have some part of his holy word read, and so his divine will made known to us. There we pray for all things necessary both for life and godliness; for whatsoever we can want or desire to make us happy in this world

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and the next. And all this we there do in such a solemn and reverend manner as becomes the work we are about: insomuch that if it be not our own fault, we can never go to church, but we shall return better than we went. Which if all people were but as sensible of as some are, we should not need to use any arguments to persuade them to frequent our public prayers as oft as possibly they can. But it is impossible they should ever know what advantage it would be to them unless they first make trial of it.

Which therefore that I may, by God's assistance, persuade all here present for the future to do, I desire you to consider first, that he himself that made you, hath sufficiently declared it to be his will and pleasure that you should perform public devotions to him twice a day, *morn-  
ing and evening*, in that he expressly required and commanded his ancient church and people, the children of *Israel*, to do so. For, as I have shown, he commanded them to sacrifice two

lambs every day, one in the morning, and the other in the evening, or afternoon : which was the same in effect, as to command them to perform their public devotions to him twice every day. For such were the sacrifices unto them. Not only because, by offering up such sacrifices to him in obedience to his command, they publicly acknowledged his supreme authority and power over all things ; but likewise, because, together with their sacrifices, they always offered up, as they were bound, their prayers and praises to him. For they never sacrificed, but they prayed at the same time, and esteemed no prayers so effectual as those which were joined with sacrifices ; as appears from several places of Scripture where we read, that *Abraham built an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord*, Gen. xii. 7. And so did *Isaac*, chap. xxvi. 25. He first built an altar, whereon to offer his sacrifice, and then prayed. And of *Samuel* it is said, that *he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the*

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*Lord ; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him, 1 Samuel vii. 9. And when Samuel had blamed Saul for offering a burnt-offering before the time that he came to him, according to his promise, Saul, to excuse himself, said, I said the Philistians will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made my supplication unto the Lord. I forced myself therefore and offered a burnt-offering, 1 Samuel xiii. 12, where he speaks as if offering his sacrifice, and making his supplication unto the Lord, was one and the same thing ; not that it was so in itself, as some have thought, but because that sacrifice was so necessary to make his prayer acceptable unto God, that he could not do one without the other ; he could not pray, as he thought, effectually, without a burnt-offering. There are many such places in the *Old Testament*, from whence it might be proved, that sacrifices and prayers always went together, neither are there some wanting in the *New*. As in the place which I mentioned before upon*

another occasion, where it is said, that *the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense*, Luke i. 10. For the time of incense was, while the sacrifice was burning upon the altar, and therefore that was the time of their public prayers. But I need not have gone from my text, to have proved this. For the *ninth hour* is here called the hour of prayer ; but that, as I have proved already, was the hour of the evening sacrifice, which puts it beyond all doubt, that their daily sacrifices were always accompanied in course with public prayers and devotions. And that is why the temple, where the sacrifices were offered, was called an *house of prayer*, as well as *house of sacrifice*, 2 Sam. vii. 12. Yea, it is much oftener called by that name, than it is by this ; prayer being the duty principally required there, and sacrifice only for the sake of that, to make way for it to go up as a memorial before God, and to be well-pleasing unto him ; not as if there was any such virtue in the blood of a lamb, or in flesh smok-



ing upon the altar, but by means of the typical relation which it had to Christ, *the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world*; by whom alone our prayers are acceptable unto God, as I observed before.

Wherefore, seeing God was pleased to command that sacrifices should be offered twice a day, to accompany and assist his people's devotions; there was plainly something *moral* as well as *Levitical*, in that command. As it respected the sacrifices, it was purely *Levitical*, and therefore to cease at our Saviour's death; but as it respected the people's devotions, it was *moral*, and of perpetual obligation. People always were, and always will be, bound to offer up their prayers and thanksgivings unto God; and this, as being a moral duty, was even in those days reckoned the more acceptable sacrifice of the two. *I will praise the name of God, saith David, with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving; this also shall please the Lord, better than an ox or bullock that hath*

*horns and hoofs*, Psal. lxi. 30, 31. And therefore, when God commanded the *less*, it cannot be imagined but that he required the *more* principal duty, even public prayers and praises to be offered to him twice a day ; as the Jews plainly understood it. As appears, in that they had their daily prayers as constantly as they had their daily sacrifices, and that too at the same times when God commanded them to be offered, even every morning and evening : which they would not have had, if they had not looked upon themselves as obliged by that command to pray as well as to sacrifice at those times.

But surely, to pray to God, and to praise his holy name, which make up our public devotions, is a duty as much incumbent upon *Christians* as ever it was upon the *Jews*. It is our only sacrifice which we offer unto God in the name of his son : *By him therefore*, saith the Apostle, *let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giv-*



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*ing thanks to his name*, Heb. xiii. 15. This is now to be our continual sacrifice, and though we do not offer up a lamb to God, together with our devotions every day, yet we present that to him which is of more worth and value, than what the *Jews* offered. They presented the shadow, we the substance : they offered a lamb, as a type of Christ to come, we offer up our prayers to God, in the name of Christ himself, as already sacrificed for us, and as presenting our prayers to his Father with the incense of his own merits. Whilst they prayed, Christ's death and intercession for them were only typically represented by a Lamb burning upon one, and incense upon another altar. But in all our prayers we actually name Him, as the person by whose alone merits, and mediations, our prayers can be accepted ; concluding every *collect*, with saying, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*, or something to that purpose.

By which means, we have better ground, and clearer occasion also given us to trust in God

for his acceptance of our devotions than they had ; and therefore ought certainly to be as constant as they were in the performance of them, otherwise we can expect no other, but that they will rise up against us in judgment at the last day ; neither do I see what we can answer or plead for ourselves. For God having once commanded, that sacrifices should be offered to him every morning and evening in the year ; he thereby plainly signified, that it is his divine will and pleasure, that his people in all ages should do something twice every day, whereby to make their public acknowledgments of his absolute dominion over them ; and of his infinite goodness and mercy to them. But, this we cannot do now any other way, but by praying to him, and praising and magnifying his most glorious name, in a public and solemn manner, which we are therefore doubtless bound to do, or at least to take all opportunities that we can get of doing it twice every day.

And indeed, Christ himself doth in effect require the same thing of us ; for, that it is his pleasure, that we should constantly use that form of prayer, which he as our great Lord and Master was pleased to compose for all his disciples, is so plain, that I wonder how any can doubt of it ; there being no command in all the Bible more plain than that, *when ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.* Luke ii .2. But it is as plain, that he designed this prayer should be used publicly and in common by his disciples, when met together in their public assemblies. In that he hath drawn it up all along in the *plural number*, that many may join together in it, and say, “ Our Father, which art in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” So that there is not one petition, nor one expression in it, but what a whole congregation may jointly use. From whence *St. Cyprian*

truly observed, that this is *publica et communis oratio*, a public and common prayer. Not but that it may, and ought to be also used privately by every single Christian apart by himself; because every Christian is a member of Christ's Catholic Church, and should pray as such in private, as well as in public; and for all his fellow members as well as for himself, they being all but one body. But however, it must be acknowledged, that being so exactly fitted to a public congregation, it was primarily and chiefly intended for that purpose. And that our Saviour would have us say this prayer every day, appears most plainly from that petition in it, *Give us this day our daily bread*. For this shows, that as we depend upon God every day for our necessary food, so we ought to pray unto him every day for it. And if we must put up this petition every day, we must put up all the rest with it. For Christ hath joined them all together, and therefore we must not put them asunder. Neither is there any

part of the prayer, but what is as necessary to be said every day as this.

Wherefore, seeing our blessed Saviour himself was most graciously pleased to compose this prayer, so as to suit it to our daily public devotions, and hath plainly commanded us to use it, according as he had composed it; we may reasonably from thence infer, that it is his Divine will and pleasure, that we should publicly pray to our heavenly Father every day, as his church had all along before done it, *morning and evening*. Be sure his Apostles thought so when they had received his *Holy Spirit to lead them*, according to his promise, *into all truth, and to bring into their remembrance all things that he had said unto them*. For after the day of *Pentecost*, on which the *Holy Ghost* came upon them, the next news that we hear of any of them, is, that *Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour, or the hour of Evening prayer*; which they would not have done if they had

not believed it to be agreeable to the doctrine which he had taught them.

And if there was no divine revelation for it, our natural reason might teach us the same thing. For, seeing we depend continually upon God, and every day receive fresh mercies from him ; there is all the reason in the world, that we should every day, some way or other, testify our acknowledgment that we do so. For that is all that we can do to him, for all that he does for us. We cannot give him anything, for we have nothing but what he gives us. And therefore he expects nothing from us, for all the favors he is pleased to show us, but only to own that they come from him, and to show we do so, by all such means and methods, as he for that purpose hath prescribed to us. Of which, the performance of public devotions was always reckoned the most plain and proper. I say *public*, for what we do in *private*, none in the world knows but God, and ourselves. But by performing our public de-



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votions to him, we demonstrate to the world, that we believe and acknowledge, that he is the supreme governor and disposer of all things in it, that it is in him we live, and move, and have our being; and that we neither have, nor can have anything, but what we receive from him. By our praising him for what we have, we own that it was he who gave it; and by praying to him for what we want, we own that it is he alone who can give it to us. And by doing this publicly, we show that we are not ashamed to own it, nor care if all the world knows that we have nothing of our own; nothing but what we received from God, and wish that all others would join with us, and assist us in praising of him, and in praying to him, both for themselves, and for us too. This is properly to serve God, and glorify him in the world: the great work we were made for, and for which we are still supported and maintained by him. So that by this means we may so far answer the end of our creation, and the



end of all his goodness and mercies to us. For he *made all things for himself* at first, Prov. xvi. 4. And he still doth all things for himself, even for his own glory. And we accordingly set forth his glory in all our public devotions ; by owning him publicly for our great and continual benefactor, by recounting the glorious works that he hath done for us, and supplicating for all the good things that we can ever have : and so ascribing the glory of all to him. And therefore we ought in reason to perform such devotions as often as we can. We are bound to do it, by all those reasons which oblige us to serve God that made us, and to do the work which he sent us into the world about. For that, this is properly the serving of God, or as we therefore call it, "Divine Service ;" the Holy Ghost himself testifies, where speaking of "Anna the Prophetess," he saith, "that she departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayer, night and day," Luke ii. 37, that is, as she constant-

ly kept the fasts of the church, so she as constantly went *to the temple at the hour of prayer*, both evening and morning; and there performed her devotions. And if we would have the same testimony that she had, even, that we serve God, we must endeavor all we can to follow her pious example, as we see the Apostles in my text did, by going *into the Temple*, or the House of God, *at the hour of prayer*.

And, as this is much for the honor of God, so it is also for the honor of Christ, and that holy religion which he hath planted upon earth; which, though it be the best, or rather the *only* true religion professed in the world, yet it cannot appear to be so any other way, than by the lives and actions of those who profess it; and particularly by the frequency of their public devotions to the supreme governor of the world. If they who profess the Christian religion come short of other people in this, it would be a great reflection upon the founder of it. For it would seem to intimate, as if his religion had not that

power upon the minds of men as others have, nor answered the end and notion of religion in general, even the glorifying Almighty God, so well as others do. But there are no people upon earth, we know of, who have any sense of religion at all but they do something or other every day, whereby to express it, and to show the great esteem and respect they have for the God they worship.

The *Mahometans*, although their religion be grounded upon mere imposture, yet notwithstanding, being obliged by it to pray five times a day, they usually do it, if they can, in their mosques or temples. I know the *primitive Christians* prayed oftener, and so do many at this day, either in *public* or *private*. But the greatest part of those which are called Christians, scarce ever pray, at least as we know of, so much as once a week, unless it be perhaps on the *Lord's day*. Nay, I fear there are many, who never publicly pray at all, for a whole year together, if in their whole lives. But wo

to such Christians as these, if they may be called so, who thus crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh ; putting him to open shame. It will be far more tolerable for *Turks* and *Mahometans*, at the day of judgment, than for these.

The *Jews*, as I have shown, had their set hours of prayer, every morning and evening, both at the temple, and in all their synagogues, which were dispersed all over the country. And they were so constant and punctual in going thither *at the hours of prayer*, that if any one lived near a synagogue, and did not then go to pray with the congregation, they put a mark upon that man, calling him *schakin rang*, an ill neighbor, as *Maimonodes*, a learned *Jew*, assures us in his *Tephillah*. I wish there were no such neighbors among us, *ill neighbors*, that seldom or never join with us in our public devotions ; and so, as to all outward appearance, live *as without God in the world*. But what a reproach is this to our holy religion, and to our blessed Saviour himself, the author of it, that

*Jews* and *Turks*, who are strangers, yea enemies to his religion, should be more constant at their devotions to Almighty God, than they who profess it? God grant it may never be laid to their charge. But why do I wish that when I know that it will. It will most certainly be laid to their charge ere long, except they repent before it be too late ; and that too, so as to be as constant for the future at our public prayers, as they have hitherto slighted or neglected them.

This would, in a great measure, retrieve the honor which our religion has lost by such careless professors of it ; for it would cast such a lustre upon it, as would make it outshine all other religions in its outward appearance, as much as it excels them in its inward purity and truth ; which would redound very much to the glory of Christ, our ever blessed Redeemer. And therefore, all that have any regard for that, as I hope we all have, cannot but look upon themselves as bound in duty to take all oppor-

tunities they can get of performing their public devotions to Almighty God, according as that religion requires which he hath taught, and they profess.

If we would but give ourselves time to look into these things, which I have thus briefly explained, we might easily see, what obligations lie upon ministers to read, and people to assist at our public prayers, when and wheresoever they can get an opportunity. It is God's will, and for his glory ; and therefore it is our duty, and we are bound to do it, whether we can get anything by it or no. But that great and most gracious God, whom we serve, hath of his infinite goodness so ordered it, that whatsoever is done in obedience to his command, and for the honor of his name, doth *ipso facto* tend also to our profit and advantage. And this particularly doth so in an high degree.

Prayer itself, in general, is a duty so well-pleasing unto God, that he hath appointed it to be the means whereby to obtain of him all the



good things we can want or desire ; he hath passed his word, and hath promised to grant them if we ask them as we ought, in the name of Christ, and with faith in his word and promise, Matt. vii. 7 : chap. xxi. 22. Mark xi. 24. Job xvi. 23, &c. And if the prayers which single persons make in their own private houses or closets be so powerful and prevalent, those are much more so which are made by several persons met together for that purpose in God's house. To these public prayers, there are many special promises made, which belong peculiarly unto them. I shall instance only two. The first shall be that of our blessed Saviour ; " Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree upon earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 19, 20. Here we have Christ's own word, that where any two (much more



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where *many*) agree to ask anything of God, as we do in every petition we put up in our public prayers, it shall be done for them. And that where two or three, or any number of devout persons, are met together in his name, he is specially present with them, to hear their prayers, and to present them to his Father, to be accepted, and granted by him. Which promise, in all respects, doth as properly belong to our public, as to any prayers that can be made ; they being such as we all agree in before-hand ; and we do not only meet, but put them up also in the name of Christ.

The same may be said also of the promise which God made to the House which *Solomon* had built and dedicated to him, saying, *Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place*, 2 Chron. vii. 15. For though this promise was first made to that house particularly, yet in that, it was designed for all such places as should be dedicated to God, as that was. As

God having said to *Joshua*, *I will not fail thee nor forsake thee*, Josh. i. 5. The Apostle from thence infers, that we may boldly say, *the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 6. So here, the Lord having said to *Solomon*, *Mine ears shall be attent to the prayer that is made in this place*; we may boldly say, the Lord hath a particular respect to places devoted to his service, and will in a peculiar manner hear and accept the prayers which we make in them.

Now seeing there are such special promises made to prayers publicly performed by several persons together in God's own house; we therefore ought to have a special regard to such prayers, and a special trust and confidence, that God, according to the said promises, will in a special manner hear them, and grant what we there pray for together. And then he will certainly do it, as the saints of God in all ages have found by experience; and therefore have always preferred the *public* before the *private* de-

votions. And if they could not be bodily present with them, while their brethren were at their public devotions in God's house, yet they had such a respect to them, that they would pray at the same time, and so join with them in their souls, although they could not do it with their bodies. There are many instances of this in the Holy Scripture ; and some wherein God himself was pleased, in a wonderful manner, to signify his approbation of it. It was at the evening sacrifice, the time of public prayer, that *Ezra* made that solemn prayer, which was so highly approved of, as to be made part of the Canonical Scriptures, *Ezra* ix. 5. It was at the time of the offering the evening sacrifice at *Hierusalem*, that *Elijah* the prophet at *Mount Carmel* prayed so effectually, that "the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stone, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench," which he had there made, to the confirming of the people in the worship of the true God,

1 Kings xviii. 26, 29. It was about the time of the evening oblation, that *Daniel* was praying, when the angel *Gabriel* was sent to acquaint him with the precise time of the *Messiah's* coming, Dan. ix. 21. And if we may believe an Apocryphal book, it was about the time that the incense that evening was offered at *Jerusalem*, in the house of the Lord, that *Judeth* prayed at *Bethulia*, so as to overcome that vast army which then lay before the place, *Judeth* ix. 1. Be sure it was at the *ninth hour*, the hour of evening prayer, that *Cornelius* was praying in his house, when an angel was sent to acquaint him, that his “prayers and his alms were come up for a memorial before God,” and to direct him how to come to the knowledge of Christ, and so into the way of salvation, Acts x. 3, 30.

It was not certainly for nothing, that it is so particularly noted, that these prayers were made by such eminent saints at the time of the evening sacrifice, or which is the same at *the ninth hour*, the hour of public prayer. Neither do I

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see any reason, why such a circumstance should be so often left upon record, but that we should learn thereby, that God hath a particular respect, according to his promise, to the public devotions which his people perform together to him ; so as to hear also the prayers which are made at the same time by others, who join with them in their hearts, though they cannot any other way. As *David* also did, when praying in private, or at some distance from the temple ; he said to God, “ Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hand, as the evening sacrifice,” Psal. cxli. 2, where we may observe, that in this, as well as in all the places before quoted ; not the *morn- ing*, but the *evening sacrifice*, is particularly named ; because, as I suppose, that was the greater sacrifice of the two, as being offered at the same hour wherein the death of Christ, typified by it, was actually accomplished, and for that reason also no sacrifice was to be offered after that. And here we may likewise observe

how great esteem *David* had for the public service at the temple, and how much he preferred it before his own private prayer, in that he had not only an eye to it while he prayed, and so joined as well as he could in it, but he desired that his private prayer might be like to that, or as acceptable as that was to God.

But the more pleasing any duty is to God, the more profitable it is to those who do it. And therefore he having so often, by word and deed, manifested himself well pleased with the public or common service which his people perform to him, we cannot doubt but they always receive proportionable advantage from it. The Jews called stated public prayers *mahamadoth*, stations, and have a saying among them, *that without such stations the world could not stand*. Be sure no people have any ground to expect public peace and tranquillity, without praising and praying publicly unto him, who alone can give it. But if all the people, suppose of this nation, should every day, with one



heart and mouth, join together in our common supplications to Almighty God, how happy should we then be ! How free from danger ! How safe and secure under his protection ! This is the argument which Christ himself useth, why *men ought always to pray and not to faint* ; in the parable of the unjust judge, who was at last prevailed upon to grant a widow's request, merely by her importunity in asking it. "And shall not God," saith he, "avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ? I tell you, he will avenge them speedily." But then, he adds, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?" Luke xviii. 7, 8. As if he had said, God will most certainly avenge and protect those who cry day and night, morning and evening, to him. But men will not believe this ; and that is the reason why there are so few who believe that he will hear their prayers according to his promise. But blessed be God,



though they be but few, there are some who really believe God's word, and accordingly pray every morning and evening, not only for themselves, but for the country where they live, for all their governors both in church and state, and for all sorts and conditions of men among us. To these the whole kingdom is beholden for its support and preservation. If they should once fail, I know not what should become of us. But so long as there are pious and devout persons crying day and night to God for aid and defence against our enemies, we need not fear any hurt they can ever do us ; at least, according to God's ordinary course of dealing in the world. I know that he is sometimes so highly incensed against a people, that he will hearken to no intercessions for them. As when he said of the idolatrous and factious Jews, " though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people," Jer. xv. 1. *Moses* had before diverted his wrath from them, Exod. xxxii. 11, 12, 14 ; and so had

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*Samuel* ; 1 Sam. vii. 9 ; but at this time he saith, " Though both of them stood before him and besought him for it, yet he would not be reconciled to this people." Which plainly implies, that this was an extraordinary case, and that he ordinarily used to hearken to the prayers which his faithful servants, such as *Moses* and *Samuel* were, made to him in behalf of the people among whom they dwelt. According to that of the Apostle *St. James*, " The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," Jam. v. 16. To the same purpose is that parallel place in the Prophet *Ezekiel*, where God saith, " That if a land sin grievously against him, and he send the famine, the sword, the pestilence, or the like punishment, to cut off both man and beast from it, though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver none but their own souls," Ezek. xiv. 14, 16, 18, 20. But here we may likewise observe, that in such an extraordinary case as this, which God grant may

not be our own ere long, although such righteous persons, by all their prayers and tears, can deliver none else, yet they themselves shall be delivered. As *Lot* was out of *Sodom*, and the Christians, at the final destruction of *Jerusalem*, when eleven hundred thousand *Jews* perished (*Joseph. de bel. Jud. l. 7. c. 17*), and not one Christian, they being all, by the secret providence of God, conveyed out of the city before the siege began. *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 5*. Which shows the particular care that God takes of all that believe and serve him. And that, one would think, is enough to prevail with all that consult their own or others' welfare, to neglect no opportunities which they can get of serving so great and good a Master, all the ways they can, and particularly by performing their daily devotions to him. In that they have good ground to hope that he will hear their prayers for others, but may be sure that he will take care of them, whatsoever happens.

Besides these common benefits which accrue

to the kingdom and church in general, from the common prayers which are daily performed in it, and to the persons who perform them as they are members of the same : there are likewise many others which they thereby receive, every one in his own private capacity, as he is a Christian in general. Especially when they perform these their daily devotions, according to that excellent order which our church hath appointed for them. For by thus addressing themselves every day to God as their heavenly Father, they learn to live with an entire submission to him, and dependance upon him in all the changes and chances of this mortal life. By confessing their sins every day to God, their hearts are always touched with the sense of them, and with godly sorrow and repentance for them. By having God's absolution of them declared every day unto them by one of his own ministers, they are confirmed in their hopes of pardon by the blood of Christ. By praising and glorifying Almighty God every day, their

hearts are cheered, and their spirits refreshed with the remembrance and recognition of his glory and goodness towards them, as *David's* was, when he said, *My soul shall be satisfied even as it was with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips*, Psal. lxxiii. 5. By hearing some part of God's holy word read them every day, they are constantly put in mind of their duty to him, what he would have them to believe and do, which otherwise they might be apt to forget. By repeating the Apostles' creed every day, wherein all the fundamental articles of our Christian religion are comprehended, they are kept firm and steadfast in the true faith of Christ. By praying every day for pardon, and peace, and grace, and all things necessary both for this life and the next, they have the word and promise of God himself continually engaged to grant them, and therefore may be always confident that they shall have them. By approaching every day into God's special presence, and there convers-

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ing with him according to his own ordinance and appointment, they live always with a quick sense of God upon their minds, and under the influences of his Holy Spirit to assist and direct them in all their ways.

But why do I offer at showing the many and great advantages which arise from the daily frequenting the public prayers of the church, with that attention, faith, reverence, and devotion, which is requisite to so divine a duty? when they are so many and so great that no man is able fully to describe them, nor can any conceive aright of them, but only they who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern them. They find by experience that next to the frequent receiving of the Lord's supper, this is the most effectual means they can use, whereby to keep their minds always in a truly pious and Christian temper. And therefore are ready upon all occasions to attest it, not only with their lips, but also in their lives and actions. And cannot but wonder



that people should slight those holy exercises which they reap so much profit from, and feel so much pleasure and delight in. Whereas on the other side, they who never go to the prayers at all, or but very seldom, and so never receive any benefit from them to themselves, they wonder as much how others should receive any ; if they be not sometimes tempted also, to say or think with those sons of Belial in Job, " What is the Almighty that we should serve him ? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him," Job xxi. 15. I hope there are not many who really think so, but I am sure that most men act as if they thought that there is nothing to be got by serving God or praying to him. For all men naturally desire that which will bring them in any profit or advantage, and lay out themselves wholly for the obtaining of it. And therefore if they believed that the serving God would do that, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to it. If every man that came to



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prayers could be sure to get but one shilling for every time he came, I am apt to think that all the churches where there are daily prayers, would be every day as full as they can hold both morning and evening. But the mischief is, the profit which is to be had here, is of another nature and such as they cannot fancy to be any profit at all, in that they are not, as they think, made richer by it in the things pertaining to this life. Though that also is a great mistake ; “ For godliness,” or the worshipping and serving God, “ hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come,” 1 Tim. iv. 8.

But howsoever, this being only in promise, not in present payment, they cannot get it into their heads that it is worth their while to look after it. And as for the other world, which the promises respect, they have no sense of that upon their minds, or at least, not enough to over-balance their cares for this. And though men may pretend a thousand little excuses for

their neglecting the public service of God, this still lies at the bottom of them all. They do not really believe that they can get so much by that as they may by doing something else. If they did, our Churches would be as full as the Exchange is every day in the week. Whereas we find the contrary by sad and daily experience; insomuch that in this great and populous city, which professeth religion as much, if not more than any city in the world, to our shame be it spoken, there is scarcely one in an hundred, that take any more notice of God and his service, than as if they had no God to serve all the week long, and that which is worst of all, they are not sensible that it is a fault, and so cannot repent of it. Though *St. Peter* and *St. John*, and such great saints, used to go every day to church, *at the hours of prayer*, they do not look upon themselves as bound to do so; for several reasons which they know, but do not care to tell them. And they do wisely in keeping them to themselves; for they may

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perhaps make a shift to satisfy themselves at present with them, but I fear they can never satisfy others, nor themselves neither at the last day, much less the judge of the whole world. It would be very well if they could. . But so far as we can guess at them, if we examine them but by the little light we have in this world we may easily see into the vanity and weakness of them.

This therefore is that which I shall now endeavor to do. Not that I can pretend to search into all the reasons, if they may be so called, which keep men from our daily prayers. Some, I believe, have none but their own wills ; with such it would be in vain to argue. But they which have any shadow of reason for it, though some have one, some another, as they themselves best know ; yet I humbly conceive they may all be reduced to these following heads, which I shall now consider.

*First*, therefore, some will not come to our prayers, because, as they pretend, they do not

like them? But why do not they like them? Is there anything in them contrary to the Word of God, or unbecoming his service? That most of them be sure cannot say, for they never read nor heard them in their lives, nor are suffered to do it, by those which have power over them, lest they should see, as they certainly would, their error or mistake. And they who have sometimes perhaps read or heard of them, if they would but impartially examine them by God's revealed will, cannot but acknowledge them to be exactly consonant and agreeable to it: and some of them have testified the same, by joining with them upon occasion, which it is supposed they would never have done if they thought it unlawful; as it must needs be, if there be anything in them contrary to God's word. But why then do not they do it often? Why not every day? The great reason which they pretend, is because our prayers are read out of a book, and they had rather hear a man pray by heart and ex-

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tempore, which they think to be more edifying ; but the contrary to that hath been often demonstrated beyond all contradiction, together with the many and great inconveniences which usually follow upon such private ex-tempore prayers in public, not to be suffered in the Church of Christ, as they never were in any part of it till of late years, and then too, nowhere else but in this Island. And therefore at present, I would only desire those, who separate from our public prayers, not out of humor or faction, but merely out of an erroneous and misguided conscience, of which sort I hope there are some. I would desire such to consider, whether the great promise which our Saviour hath made to public prayers, can possibly be applied to their way of praying. To me it seems impossible, in that they do not perform the condition required in it. The promise I mentioned before ; it runs thus, " Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, touching anything that

they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," Matt. xviii. 19. It is plain that this promise belongs to public prayers, such as are made by several persons together, at the least by two; and it is as plain also, that it belongs only to such public prayers, wherein those several persons agree together beforehand what they shall ask or pray for. But where the Minister useth only an ex-tempore prayer, how many people soever may be present at it, there are no two of them, who agree what they shall ask: that is left wholly to the Minister, none of the people so much as knowing what he intends to ask: nor he himself neither, before he hath asked it. They may perhaps agree to it, after they hear it; and perhaps not. But if they do, that is not the thing which the promise requires. For it is made only to those, who agree touching anything that they shall ask; and so requires a previous agreement about the matter of our public prayers, before we put them up to



Almighty God, which they who use only extemporary prayers can by no means pretend to, nor by consequence to this great promise, of God's granting what they ask.

But now in the public prayers of the Church, we keep close to the condition of the promise : we ask nothing but what we all agree beforehand shall be asked. All the Clergy in *England*, by their Procurators in Convocation, and all the Commons by their Representatives in Parliament agreed together, touching everything that should be asked every day in the year ; and so do all that come to the prayers ; they all know before what shall then be asked, and accordingly agree in the asking of it ; and therefore have sure ground to believe, that God, according to his promise, will do it for them.

These words of our Saviour might be further improved, to show, not only the lawfulness, but the necessity of set forms of prayer, in the public service of God. But I suppose there are none here present but who are satisfied



already in that, and therefore shall only add, that they, who pretend this to be the reason why they do not join with us in our daily prayers, because they like those in private congregations better, at the same time give us too much cause to suspect, that there is something else at the bottom; for if that was all, they would have those which they call public prayers every day in their own way; or at least would come to ours when they have none of their own, which they never do, and so perform no sort of public service to God upon the week days; which how they will answer at the last day, for my part, I know not; but if they do, it will be very well.

There are others, who have a more plausible excuse for their not assisting at the public, because they daily perform their private devotions according to Christ's own command, saying, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners

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of streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," Matth. vi. 5, 6. But in these words, our Saviour is so far from excusing us from public prayers, that he only directs us how we ought to perform them aright, that we must not pray as the hypocritical *Pharisees* did, only to be seen of men, and so make that the end of their public prayers which were ordained, and therefore ought to be performed, not for our own, but for God's honor and glory. And whosoever performs them only to be seen of men, they have their reward they looked for, even the applause of men; but they have no ground to expect any reward from God, who never accepts any services, but such as are performed out of sincere obedience to his laws, and for the honor of his name. And therefore,

he that would pray acceptably to God, as he must often pray secretly in his closet, where he cannot have the applause of men in his eye, because none seeth him but God : so even in his public prayers, he must act with the same sincere intentions as if he was in private, aiming sincerely at the glory of God, as the great end for which public prayers were ordained, and to which they conduce much more than our private can ; for in private, none sees us but God ; but in public, though we must not pray therefore that men may see us, yet we cannot pray but some will see us acknowledging God's goodness, and imploring his mercy to us, which is much for his honor and glory. According to that remarkable saying of our blessed Saviour, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matt. v. 16.

Wherefore they who sincerely desire to observe all Christ's commands, as becometh good

Christians, they must make conscience of praying often every one in his closet, or by himself. But they must not look upon themselves, as thereby excused from praying also publicly as often as they have opportunity ; for that also, as I have shown, is elsewhere commanded by him. But rather if they happen to be brought into such a strait, that it is morally impossible for them to perform both ; they must prefer the public before their private devotions. And in both must take special care to act with that simplicity and godly sincerity, as becometh those who have to do with an all-seeing God, who hates nothing more than hypocrisy and deceit.

The same may be said of those prayers which are, or ought to be, performed in every family apart, and by itself, as the great means whereby to keep up the sense of God in it, and to have his blessing always upon it. For which purpose the *Common Prayer* is certainly the best that can be used, as it may all be, except the *Abso-*

lution, by any master of a family, who by this means may in a great measure, as to his own family, supply the wants of the public prayers of the church where they cannot be had ; but where they may, these family prayers should not hinder, but rather make way for them, by fitting the members of each family better for the more solemn service of God in the public congregation. It cannot be doubted but that *St. Peter* and *St. John* prayed both in their closets and in their families *every day* ; and yet for all that, “ They went up together into the Temple at the hour of prayer.”

Another excuse that men commonly make unto themselves for their neglecting of our daily prayers, is because God, as they say, hath given them *six days* to labor in, and hath reserved only *one* for himself ; therefore now called *His* or the *Lord's Day*. But that they solemnly observe, by joining with the congregation in his public service ; and therefore do not think themselves obliged to do so upon

other days also, whereon God doth not only permit, but require them to follow their respective callings for the maintenance of themselves and families. It is true, he doth so: but it doth not from thence follow, that they need not serve God upon those days as well as upon his own. His day ought to be spent wholly in his service, and no other business to be done upon it, which may as well be done another day. Upon other days men may and ought to mind their particular callings as well as their public devotions; but still these ought to be minded as well as those. No people were ever more strictly commanded to keep the sabbath than the *Jews* were; yet they were commanded to serve God publicly twice every day, by offering a sacrifice together with their prayers every morning and evening in the week. To which there are only two more extraordinarily added upon the sabbath. And we certainly are as much bound to offer up our prayers and praises unto God, as they were to offer



up their sacrifices every day. Otherwise our religion, in the very point of devotion, would come short of theirs, which cannot be supposed without great absurdity by any that understand it and know the Author of it.

But the vanity of this excuse appears sufficiently from what I discoursed before, concerning the necessity and advantages of daily prayers ; and therefore shall say no more to it here, but that they who never perform their public devotions unto God, but upon his own day, will hardly do it well then ; and that all who desire in good earnest to keep the Lord's Day as they ought, must go to Church at the *hour of prayer*, every day in the week if they can.

But some perhaps may say, they cannot do it. They cannot spare so much time as that requires from their worldly business upon the week days, without apparent danger of ruining themselves and families. Some perhaps may say this : I am sure all cannot. There are many in and about this city, and in the country too,



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who have no worldly business to do, or at least do none all the week long. To them every day is a Sabbath, a day of rest, wherein they have nothing else to do, but to serve him who hath given them so much leisure on purpose that they might do it. They keep holiday every day, and therefore should keep every day holy, or at least so much of it as is necessary for the offering up their public prayers and praises unto God who hath provided so liberally for them. Otherwise the time that he hath given them will be spent to little purpose, and their estates, if possible, to less. For they will be so far from doing them any good, that they will but increase their misery, if not in this world, as they often do, yet most certainly in the next.

And as for such among you as follow some particular calling, I must acknowledge it is no more than what you may and ought to do, so far as it is necessary for the maintenance of yourselves and those of your own house, and for your being better able to relieve others, and

to do good in the world. But I do not think that you can be therefore excused from attending daily upon the public worship of God, as often as you can; I say, as often as you can. For I know things may sometimes fall out so, that you cannot do it without very great inconvenience. And at such times I humbly conceive you may lawfully be absent without any scruple. But I speak only of the general course of a man's life. As it is said of our blessed Saviour, that being at *Nazareth he went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day, as his custom was*, Luke iv. 16. So it ought to be your usual custom to go every day to Church, *at the hours of prayer*, notwithstanding any ordinary business which you may have to do in the mean time. As I doubt not but you yourselves will acknowledge, if you would but seriously consider these few things.

First, consider, that ye have souls as well as bodies to take care of every day in the year, and another world to provide for as well as

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this ; an eternal world, where ye must live in happiness or misery for ever. And therefore it would be the height of folly and madness, to suffer the ordinary affairs of this life to hinder you from using the means whereby to obtain grace and salvation in the next.

Consider, also, that you neither have nor can have anything but what you receive from God. It is only his blessing that *maketh rich*, Prov. x. 22. And the way to have that, is to seek it daily of him, and to prefer your duty to him before all things else ; without which you have no ground to expect it ; but by this means you cannot fail of it, for you have his own word for it, Matt. vi. 33.

Again, consider, you can never get hurt by doing good, nor lose anything by serving God, except that which is better lost than found. Whilst you are sincerely praying to, or praising him who orders all things in the world, you may be confident, that whatsoever happens to you at that time, shall one way or other turn to

your good, or at least, no real evil shall befall you. As you see in the children of *Israel* ; all their men met together by God's command at *Jerusalem* at three certain times every year ; whereby the whole land was left naked and open, without any defence at those times against their enemies round about. And yet it is very observable, none ever invaded it, nor ever so much as attempted to do it at any of those times when they were met together before God : as he himself had promised, saying, " Neither shall any man desire thy land when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord, thrice in the year," *Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24.*

Furthermore, consider, none of you, I believe, are so busy all the day long in your trades, but you can find time to visit a friend ; and what better friend can you visit than him, *who loved you, and gave himself for you ?* None of you but can find time to go from your own into your neighbor's, or perhaps to a public house, and there continue perhaps an hour or

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two together? And what house can you go to better than God's? His house of public prayer. And where can you spend an hour or two in a day better than there? None of you but can find time every day to converse with one company or other, either about news or business no way relating to your trades. And what better company can you keep? Whom can you converse with better than Him who governs and over-rules all the occurrences of the world? And what better news can you hear than that which is publicly read to you out of his holy Word, by one of his own officers? None of you but can find time every day, when tired with business, to divert yourselves with some recreation or other. And where can you find better diversions? How can you recreate your spirits better than as the glorified saints and angels do, by praising, admiring, adoring the *eternal God, the Lamb that sitteth upon the throne in heaven*. In short, if you have no time for a whole day together, to mind anything else

but your particular calling, I heartily pity you : if you have, I am sure you can no way spend it better, than by going into the house of God, *at the hour of prayer.*

And besides, you who fear that you may lose something by it, I desire you to consider how much you may lose unless you go. If *Anna*, the prophetess, had not been in the house of God at the *hour of prayer*, when Christ was first brought thither, she had lost the sight of her Saviour, the most blessed sight that ever mortal saw, Luke ii. 37, 38. If *St. Paul* had not been praying in the temple, he had lost that heavenly trance or ecstasy, wherein Christ himself appeared and spake to him, Acts. xxii. 17. If *St. Peter and St. John* had not gone *into the temple at the hour of prayer*, they had lost the happy opportunity of working a great miracle, and of converting about five thousand persons to the faith of Christ. And those five thousand persons if they had not been there at that time, they might have lost their souls, and have been



undone for ever. So here, suppose you should happen to lose something by leaving your shops or trades awhile to come to Church and serve God there, you may lose ten times more, yea ten thousand times more by not doing of it. The utmost that you can lose by coming to Church, is only the taking or getting a little money, which may do you more hurt than good. But by not coming, you will lose the pleasure of praising and magnifying him that made you : you will lose the honor of conversing with him in his own house, and in his most special presence ; you will lose the profit you might receive from his holy word there read ; you will lose the benefit of all the prayers which are there made ; you may lose the love and favor of God, and his blessing upon what you have ; you may lose that clear sight and sense of his divine goodness, which he has often been pleased to give his people, by “ lifting up the light of his countenance upon them ” while they are before him ; you will lose the



satisfaction of having done your duty and pleased God. Indeed you may lose you know not what, nor ever will know till ye cast up your accounts at the last day, and state your profit and loss impartially on both sides. Then you will clearly see that the losses which you sustained by the neglect of your daily devotions, were infinite and inestimable, and that all the profits you got by it, were mere cyphers, signifying nothing at all.

Next to this, you may consider also that you are so happy as to live in a place, where the prayers are read most hours of the day. So that if you cannot order your affairs so as to go at one hour, you may go at another. And *both morning and evening prayer* do not take up much above an hour, or an hour and a half, in a day; and it is much if you cannot find so much time in a whole day wherein to serve and worship him, who gives you all the time you have. And if some of a family happen to be so necessarily employed for a whole day together, that they

cannot, yet it is rare but others may be spared to go to Church at the *hours of prayer*. There is no master or mistress of a family, but may, if they cannot come themselves, at least send some that belong to them, that so the family may have some share in our prayers if they will. They that will not do so much as that, have little cause to pretend any love to God, to Christ, to their own, or to any other souls that he hath purchased with his own blood.

Above all, consider the great end of your coming into and living in this world. . God did not make you only to eat and drink, much less to moil and toil only for food and raiment. It is true, he having made such things necessary for the preservation of your life, he doth not only permit, but require you to make use of all lawful means for the getting of them. But still they are only the means, not the end of your living. And as you do not live only to eat, but you eat to live ; so you live not for your own sakes, but for his who gives you life. Even for the

sake of God, who gave you life at first by his word without any means, and still continues it to you by the same word in the use of the fore-said means, and all for himself, for his own honor and glory. Which therefore is, or ought to be, the great end of your eating or drinking, and of all and every action of your whole life. As we learn from his Apostle, saying, "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. This therefore is the great end of your coming into the world, and the great work you have to do in it, even to promote his glory all you can. But in doing this work you will also work out your own salvation. For it hath pleased God of his infinite goodness, to join your works and your ways, his glory and your happiness, so inseparably together, that you cannot do one without the other; nor attain either but ye shall have both. So far as ye advance God's glory, so far ye advance your own happiness. If you glorify him, he will glorify you, though not

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for any virtue or merit there is in anything you do for him, all you do being infinitely short of what ye owe him; yet by the merits of that death which his Son hath suffered, and by virtue of that intercession he always makes for those who finish the work which he hath given them to do, even *glorify God in the world.*

Wherefore as ever you desire, as I hope you all do, not to live in vain and to no purpose, but to do the work which ye were sent hither about; you must make it your chief care and study every day, and neglect no opportunities that ye can get of promoting the glory of God, and in that your own happiness. But there is nothing you can do every day that conduceth more to that end, than our public devotions. For by them, as I have shown already, we both set forth God's glory, and forward our own salvation. And therefore they ought in reason, as well as duty, to be preferred before your ordinary affairs, as being of more consequence to the main end of your living than anything else

that you commonly do. In other cases you yourselves always make lesser businesses give way to greater. At any time you will neglect the getting a penny rather than lose a pound. And whatsoever work you have upon your hands, you will lay it aside to feed your bodies, your frail and mortal bodies, two or three times a day, because you think that to be the more necessary work. And do not you think it as necessary to take care of your souls as of your bodies? and to serve God, as to feed yourselves every day? Yea, is not this “the better part, the one thing needful?” I am sure ye cannot deny it; for Christ himself hath said it, Luke x. 42. And therefore you cannot but acknowledge that this ought to be done in the first place. So that all the common affairs of this life ought both in reason and conscience to give place, as much as is possible, to your serving God, so as that your souls may live and be happy for ever.

If you would but keep these things always

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in your mind, you would never suffer any slight occasion to keep you either from your private or public devotions: you would not consider whether you can spare time from minding the world to serve God, but whether you can spare time from serving God to mind the world; not what you may lose by going to Church, but what you may lose by staying at home: and so would need no other monitor to put you every day in mind of going to the house of God, as the Apostles did, *at the hour of prayer*.

But after all, I fear there are but few that will do it. But few of those also who have now heard it to be their duty. They think it enough that they have been hearing; as for practising, that they do not love to think of. But I heartily wish that such hearers would consider what *St. Paul* saith; "Not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified," Rom. ii. 13. What *St. James* saith; "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your



ownelves," Jam. i. 2. What *Christ* himself saith; "That servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes," Luke xii. 47. And what they themselves can say for themselves at the last day—I am sure they cannot plead ignorance, for they have been now sufficiently told of it—and what other excuses they can make besides those which have been already answered, I cannot imagine, except it be one which is not worth answering but that it will give us occasion to explain the way and manner of performing our daily devotions aright, to God's glory and our own good. And for that purpose it may not be amiss to take notice of it. In short, therefore, it is this: some perhaps may say that they have been sometimes at our daily prayers, but never found themselves any better for it, and therefore do not think it worth their while to go any more.

This, I must confess, may seem a notable



argument to such as measure their duty only by their profit, and think it not worth their while to do anything for God, unless they can get something to themselves by it. But I would have such to know, that God is their Maker, and they are therefore bound to do what he commands, whether they can get anything by it or no. If he gives them anything, they must thank him for it. For they are still but *unprofitable servants*, they have done no more than what was their *duty to do*, Luke xvii. 10; nor so much, if they do it only for their own advantage. For it is their duty, not only to do what he commands, but to do it therefore because he commands it, in sincere obedience to him and his supreme authority over all things. Unless they do that, they have no ground to expect anything from him for what they do, but wrath and judgment for not doing it as they ought. And how much soever they do, and how well soever they do it, he is not obliged to them, but they to him

for it ; it being only by his power they can do it at all, and by his grace only they do it well. And therefore, if he consider them for their doing their duty to him, they must ascribe it wholly to his free grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, which, whether he is pleased to vouchsafe unto them or no, they are still bound to obey and serve him as much as if he did ; and that too, not with respect to their own profit, but to his will and pleasure.

I speak not this, as if we could ever serve God for naught. For we can never do anything for him, but it will most certainly redound by his goodness to our advantage. But I speak it only to show the vanity of this excuse that some men make for their neglecting their public devotions, because they have been sometimes at them, but do not perceive themselves any better for it. But, after all, I am much of their mind. I do not think that they are or can be much the better, for attending upon the public worship of God only some-

times. For it is plain, that they who do it only sometimes, do it only by the by, when they have no great matter else to do. They do not make it their work or business, and therefore cannot expect any reward for it; nor get any good at all, much less so much as to be made better by it.

The solemn praying and praising God, and reading, and hearing his most holy word read, and so his divine will published and declared in his own house, by one of his own ministers, are the ordinary means of grace. But they work not by any virtue inherent in themselves, but by the power of Christ's Holy Spirit, which, according to his promise, abides continually in his Church, assisting and actuating the said means, when duly administered in it, so as to make them effectual to the end for which they were ordained. And therefore, they who would attain that end, must use those means, not only now and then, but constantly, or at least as often as they can. They must "watch

daily at the gates of wisdom, and wait at the posts of her doors, if ever they desire to be admitted in," Prov. viii. 34. They must live continually under the influences of God's Holy Spirit, moving upon their souls, as he did upon the waters in the creation, till he hath brought them into order, and created them again in *Jesus Christ* unto good works. Otherwise they have no ground to expect to be made new creatures. It is not a man's going into the right way sometimes, but his walking in it, that will bring him to his journey's end. Our public devotions are the way; the right way that leads to the grace of God: but he that would come at the end, so as to have the grace of God always sufficient for him; he must not only step into this way sometimes, but he must keep always in it, as much as it is possible, so as to let slip no opportunity he can get, of going to the house of God at the *hour of prayer*. Neither is that all: it is not enough to go into the house of God *at the hour of prayer*, but

when he is there he must do the work of that time and place, and nothing else. He must not stand looking about him, as if he had nothing to do there; neither must he suffer his thoughts to wander about upon other things, like those the Prophet speaks of, saying, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness," Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Such people had as good be out of the Church as in it, for any good they either do or get there. Indeed they are not wholly in it; only their worser part, their bodies are there, their souls are at home, in their shops, among their chapmen or neighbors, or running about the country, perhaps as far as the *Indies*, minding their affairs there. And how can such people expect to be ever the better for being in God's house, when they affront him to his face, making a show as if they

served him, when really they are about other business? Yet this is the case of most of those who go thither only sometimes; for not being used to that kind of work, they do not know how to set about it, much less to keep their minds so intent upon it as is necessary to the due performance of it.

The work we have to do in God's house, is a great work, the greatest we can ever do; it is God's own work, the work he tells us to do for himself, even to serve, and worship, and glorify him, that made both our souls and bodies; and therefore both our souls and bodies must be wholly employed in it. As for our bodies, he hath given us this general rule, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God," Eccles. v. 1, that is, look to thy ways, take care of thy outward carriage and deportment; see thou behavest thyself in God's house as becometh one who believeth himself to be in the presence of the greatest person in the world. For so we are whenso-



ever we meet together in God's house, we are in his special presence. He himself hath said, that *he is in the midst of us* ; and therefore we are bound to believe it ; and to show we do so by all such reverent and humble gestures before him, as we should certainly use if we saw him with our bodily eyes. Especially when we pray unto him, we must do it upon our knees, as we should if we put up a petition but to an earthly prince. How much more to the King of all kings ! And when we praise his holy name, although we do it standing, yet that also must be done in such a posture of adoration, as may testify our fear and reverence of his divine majesty. Some perhaps may think these to be mere ceremonies ; but I am sure, that kneeling and bowing to Almighty God, is that which the holy Scriptures mean by worshipping of him, and therefore forbid us to do it to any in a religious manner, but to the true God. And as this is the way to worship God with our bodies, so it is the best means we can use,



whereby to keep our souls too in a pious and devout temper before him. For by this means we are all the while put in mind of that glorious person we are speaking to, and of the great work we are about; which otherwise we should be very apt to forget: as we have too much cause to fear they do, who speak to God in the same posture as they do to one another. I say, speak, not pray, for that is the work of the heart as well as of the mouth. And if their hearts were upon God, while they are speaking to him, I do not see how it is possible for them not to fall down and worship before him.

But we must remember, that "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24, that is, at the same time that they worship God with their bodies, they must do it also in their spirits, without which all their bodily worship will signify nothing. For worship, properly so called, is nothing else but some outward sign of our inward fear of God. But

where there is no fear of God in the spirit, there cannot be truly any outward sign of it. And therefore such cannot be said to worship God in truth, who do not worship him in their spirits as well as with their bodies.

Here then is the great task we have to do in all our public devotions, even to keep our spirits or hearts in a right posture all the while that we are before God, who sees them and takes special notice of all their motions : that we may *pray with the spirit, and pray with the understanding also*, as *St. Paul* did, 1 Cor. xiv. 15. I call this a great task, because I know that it is the hardest work we have to do. Our thoughts being very quick and nimble, so unconstant and desultory, that it is difficult to keep them close to the work we are about, so as to serve the Lord without distraction. But it is a thing that must be done, if we desire to receive any real benefit and comfort from our devotions. And blessed be God, by his assistance we may all do it if we will but set our-

selves in good earnest about it, and observe these few rules, which may be very helpful unto us in it.

First, when you go to the house of God *at the hour of prayer*, be sure to leave all worldly cares and business behind you, entertaining yourselves as ye go along, with these or such like sentences of scripture; "Like as the hart desireth the water brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Psal. xlii. 1, 2. "O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! My soul hath desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God," Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2. "We will go into his tabernacle, and fall low on our knees before his footstool," Psal. cxxxii. 7.

When ye come into the Church, say with *Jacob*, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God; and this is

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the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 17, or something to that purpose. And as soon as ye can get an opportunity, prostrate yourselves upon your knees before the Master of the house, the great God of heaven, humbly beseeching him to unite your hearts unto himself, to cleanse your thoughts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, to open your eyes, and to manifest himself unto you, and to assist you with such a measure of grace in offering up these your spiritual sacrifices, that they be acceptable to him by Jesus Christ.

And now set yourselves in good earnest, as in God's sight, keeping your eye only upon him, looking upon him as observing what you think as well as what you say or do, all the while you are before him.

While one or more of the sentences out of God's holy Word (wherewith we very properly begin our devotions to him) are reading, apprehend it as spoken by God himself at first, and now repeated in your ears to put you in mind

of something which he would have you to believe or do upon this occasion.

While the exhortation is reading, hearken diligently to it, and take particular notice of every word and expression in it, as contrived on purpose to prepare thee for the service of God, by possessing your minds with a due sense of his special presence with you, and of the great ends of your coming before him at this time.

While you are confessing your sins with your mouth, be sure to do it also in your hearts, calling to mind every one as many as he can of those particular sins which he hath committed, either by doing what he ought not to do, or not doing what he ought, so as to repent sincerely of them, and steadfastly to resolve never to commit them any more.

While the Minister is pronouncing the absolution in the name of God, every one should lay hold upon it for himself, so as firmly to believe that upon true repentance and faith in Christ,

he is now discharged and absolved from all his sins, as certainly as if God himself had declared it with his own mouth, as he hath often done it before, and now by his ministers.

While you, together with the Minister, are repeating the psalms or hymns to the honor and glory of God, observe the Minister's part as well as your own; and lift up your hearts together with your voices to the highest pitch you can, in acknowledging, magnifying, and praising the infinite wisdom, and power, and goodness, and glory of the most high God, in all his works, the wonders that he hath done and still doth for the children of men, and for you among the rest.

While God's Word is read in either of the chapters, whether of the Old or New Testament, "receive it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the Word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13. And, therefore, hearken to it with the same attention, reverence, and faith, as you



would have done if you had stood by mount *Sinai*, when God proclaimed the law, and by our Saviour's side, when he published the gospel.

While the prayers or collects are reading, although you ought not to repeat them aloud, to the disturbance of other people, yet you must repeat them in your hearts, your minds accompanying the Minister from one prayer to another, and from one part of each prayer to the other, all along with affections suitable to the matter sounding in your ears, humbly adoring and admiring God, according to the names, properties, or works which are attributed to him at the beginning of each prayer, earnestly desiring the good things which are asked of him in the body of it, for yourselves or others ; and steadfastly believing in Jesus Christ for his granting of them, when he is named, as he is at the end of every prayer, except that of *St. Chrysostome*, because that is directed immediately to Christ himself, as promising that



“ when two or three are gathered together in his name, he will grant their requests,” which is, therefore, very properly put at the end of all our daily prayers, and also of the *litany* (most part whereof is directed also to our Saviour), that when we have made all our common supplications unto him, we may act our faith in him again for God’s granting of them according to his said promise ; and so may be dismissed with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost ; under which are comprehended all the blessings that we have or can desire to make us completely happy both now and for ever.

After the blessing it may be expedient still to continue for some time upon your knees, humbly beseeching Almighty God to pardon what he hath seen amiss in you since you came into his presence : and that he would be graciously pleased to hear the prayers, and to accept of the praises which you have now offered

up unto him, through the merits of Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Advocate.

These few things I thought good to lay before you, as being of great use towards the right performance of your public devotions, so as that they may be both acceptable to God and profitable to yourselves. I fear some may think it hard to keep their minds intent so long together ; but they can do it much longer upon worldly affairs, and therefore may in this too, if they will. If they will. There lies the main stress of the business. If men will resolve by God's assistance to fix their minds upon him and his service while they are before him, they may certainly do it in a high degree. As I do not doubt but many here present have found by their own experience. Such, I mean, who have been long accustomed to it. And though to others it may seem difficult at first, yet by use it will soon grow easy, if they will be persuaded to make trial of it, which I wish heartily you would all do. Try a little what it is to

go to the house of God *every day at the hours of prayer*, and there to perform your devotions to him with all your hearts as near as you can. Do but use yourselves to it for one quarter or half a year, and I dare say that you will find it not only easy, but so pleasant and profitable to your souls, that you will never leave it off so long as you are able to do it. And though you cannot do everything so well as you would at first, let not that discourage you; but strive to do it as well as you can; and then by his assistance who is there specially present with you, by degrees you will overcome all difficulties, and learn to use those blessed means of grace, so as to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ every day more and more.

And, indeed, unless you do that, you may be confident that you do not use them aright. For there are so many promises made to them by him who cannot lie, that if there be no failure in the use, they can never fail of their effect.

Insomuch that if notwithstanding your frequenting our daily prayers, you shall still continue in any known sin, if you do not gather strength to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil ; if you do not increase in the knowledge and love of God, in temperance, patience, meekness, and humility, in justice, charity and all manner of virtue ; in short, if you do not live more soberly, more righteously, and more godly in this present world than otherwise you would, you may be sure, that although you live under the means of grace, you do not make that use of them which you might and ought to do ; though you seem to perform your devotions to God, yet really you do it not. How oft soever your bodies may be at Church, your hearts are always somewhere else. And so you come to no purpose at all ; or rather to very ill purpose. For this is plainly to mock God, and to play the hypocrites with him, making as if you had a mind to serve and glorify him, when you mind nothing less, but rather do him all the disser-

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vice and dishonor that you can, by giving occasion to the enemy to blaspheme his holy name, and to think it is to no purpose to serve God, seeing you who seem to do it are as bad as other people. And besides hereby you may discourage many who otherwise would be inclined to set upon a pious and religious course of life. For when they observe any of you who come to Church every day, guilty of the same vices as they are who never come at all, they will be tempted to judge that all are so; and by consequence that there is nothing in devotion but a mere outward show and appearance of religion; and that they who go to Church, do it not to serve God, but themselves; to get themselves the name and reputation of being pious and godly men, and under that cloak to hide their faults, and commit all manner of villany, as some sort of men we know, of later years, have done, to the scandal and reproach of the Christian religion. So that by this means your very coming to Church would

be more for the devil's service than for God's. The devil always had and always will have a spite at our public devotions, and catch at all opportunities to throw dirt in their face, to make them appear as deformed and ugly as he can. And if any of those who frequent God's house and seem to serve him there, should notwithstanding lead wicked and profane lives, they would promote the same hellish design of bringing devotion into contempt and scorn, and so would do the devil's work and must expect their wages from him at last.

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak,” Heb. vi. 9. And although some of those who come to prayers only now and then when they have nothing else to do, may perhaps be the devil's drudges in this matter; yet I cannot imagine how they should be so who make it their business to serve God publicly every day. For that must needs give check to any evil motions, and leave such a tinc-



ture upon their minds, that will break and show itself in all holy conversation and godliness. And therefore I speak this only to show how much it concerns you to take care how you live, and for that purpose how you pray: that your lives may in all points be such as becometh the gospel of Christ; that you may adorn your profession with all virtuous and good works; that you may shine as lights in the world; so that men may see there is more in going every day to Church, than they are aware of, and so may be persuaded to follow you thither *at the hours of prayer*.

But for that purpose, whenever ye go thither ye must be sure to do the work you go about as well as possibly you can. For the better you serve God there, the better you will do it everywhere else; the more serious and hearty you are at your public devotions, the more righteous and holy you will be in all manner of conversation both towards God and towards men. For as these are in themselves some of those



duties which we owe to God, so they are the means too which he hath appointed whereby to give us grace to perform all the rest. And the more carefully we use the means, the more grace we shall get by them. So that by this means we may “add to our faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity,” 2. Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. Neither shall we only add one grace to another, but also one degree of every grace unto another. “We shall go from strength to strength, till we come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” Eph. iv. 13.

This is a great truth. But I would not have you take it only from me, but from yourselves. And for that purpose make the experiment. Take all occasions you can get of going daily into the house of God, *at the hours of prayer,*

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and to his table when his supper is there administered, and perform the several duties which are there required of you, with all the care and diligence that you can. Do but this, and you will find all that I have said to be not only true, but short of what you yourselves will feel ; and so will be soon convinced by your own experience, that weekly sacraments, and daily prayers, are the greatest blessings you can have on this side heaven, and the best way to bring you thither, through the merits of Jesus Christ to whom, &c.

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1845.

THE  
GREAT NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE  
OF  
*Frequent Communion,*  
DESIGNED TO REVIVE  
PRIMITIVE PIETY.



THE  
GREAT NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE  
OF  
FREQUENT COMMUNION.

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1 COR. XI. 26.

For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do  
show the Lord's death till he come.

THE Lord's death here spoken of, is the death of the Lord, the Almighty and Eternal Son of God; that death which he suffered in the nature, and in the stead of mankind in general, and particularly of us who are here present; that death, whereby he expiated our sins, and made complete satisfaction to the divine truth and justice for them: that death, whereby he appeased the wrath which He that made us had justly conceived against us, and hath reconciled Him again unto us: that death whereby he delivered us from the slavery of sin and

*Satan*, and asserted us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God: that death, whereby he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made himself a curse for us: that death, whereby he purchased for us both pardon, and peace, and mercy, and grace, and power to eschew evil and do good, and all the blessings we can ever have or desire, either in this world or the next: that death, by virtue whereof he entered into heaven, “now to appear in the presence of God for us,” and therefore “is able to save to the utmost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them,” Heb. vii. 25. This is that Lord’s death, which the Apostle here saith we show, “as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup” he speaks of in the verses before my text, where he saith, that the “Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After



the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." In which words we have Christ's own institution of the sacrament of his last supper, together with the end of it declared by himself, saying at the institution of the bread, *This do in remembrance of me*: and again at the cup, *This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*, that is (as is signified in the institution itself) *in remembrance of my body as broken, and my blood as shed*, and so in remembrance of me, as dying for the sins of the world, and yours amongst the rest. And that this is the great end of this holy institution, the Apostle farther proves and explains in the words of my text, from this reason, because hereby we *show the Lord's death*; the *bread* shows the breaking of his body, the *cup* shows the shedding of his blood, and so both together show the death he suffered for us. *For as often*, saith he, *as ye eat this bread and*

*drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*

In which words we may *first* observe, that every time that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is administered, his death is thereby shown and declared to all that are there present. As when the *Jews* ate the paschal lamb, the master of the family declared the reasons why they ate it, why they ate it with bitter herbs, and why with unleavened bread, and the like. So here, when we eat the bread and drink the cup according to Christ's institution, we thereby declare the reasons of it, though not by words yet by the very act itself, and the several circumstances of it. By the *breaking of the bread*, we declare Christ's body to be broken and wounded to death ; by the *cup*, we declare his blood to be shed or poured out for the sins of the world, and by distributing both the bread and the cup to each communicant apart, we declare to every one particularly that Christ died for his sins, and that he may be

saved by Christ's death, if he will but receive and apply it to himself as he ought, by a quick and lively faith.

In the *next* place, we may here observe, that the Apostle doth not say that Christ's death is repeated, or that he is offered up again every time this sacrament is administered, but only that the Lord's death is shown by it. And, therefore, that that is not, as the Papists absurdly imagine, a *propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead*, but only *commemorative and declarative* of that one sacrifice which Christ once offered to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. We may here likewise observe, that the Apostle doth not say, as often as ye eat this bread, ye show the Lord's death, but ye do it, as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup. And, therefore, unless both kinds be administered, as Christ's institution is not observed, so neither is the end of it attained ; for his death is not shown by any one, but by both together.

Moreover we may observe, that the Apostle here plainly calls it *bread*, and the *cup*, or *wine* ; not the very body or blood of Christ, yea, he saith, it is bread we eat, and it is the cup or wine we drink, and therefore we do not eat the very body that hung upon the cross, nor drink the blood which was there spilt for us, but only in a sacramental sense, which quite overthrows the *doctrine of transubstantiation*.

Again, we may from hence observe, that this was no temporary institution, which was to continue only for some time, but to the end of the world, or as the Apostle here expresseth it, *till He, our Lord and Saviour, come*. As from the beginning of the world, as often as they offered, according to its first institution, any bloody sacrifice to God, they thereby fore-showed the death of Christ, typified by it, until his first coming into the world to save it. So since that time, *as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup*, according to Christ's own

institution, *we show forth his death* all along until his second coming into the world to judge it. So that it is now by this sacrament that mankind is and always must be put in mind of their Saviour, and what he suffered for them, and therefore this can never be laid aside, but must continue in the Church to the end of the world. Neither can that be reckoned any part of Christ's Church, where this his own most holy institution, is rejected, disused, or never observed as it ought.

*Lastly*, we may here observe, that as this sacrament is to continue always in the Church, so it must be often repeated by the same persons in it. The other sacrament, even baptism, is likewise to be always administered in the Church, but it can be administered but once to one and the same person; but the Apostle here speaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, saith to the same persons, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup:" and to the same purpose our Lord himself, in

the institution of the cup, saith, "This do ye as often as ye drink it:" plainly implying, that this should be often done by those who are once admitted into his Church: as a man can be born but once: but when he is once born, he must often eat and drink such things as God hath appointed for the preservation of his natural life; so when a man is once regenerate and born again of water and of the Spirit, he must often eat this bread and drink this cup, as the great means appointed by Christ himself for the preservation of his spiritual life; which can never be supported aright without this spiritual food, no more than the natural life can without bodily sustenance.

This therefore is that which I intend, by God's assistance, in a more especial manner to speak to at this time. And it is but time to say all we can of it, when this holy sacrament is so generally neglected, as it now is (to our shame be it spoken), all the kingdom over. Blessed be God, except some few heathens



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which are among us, such I mean as were never yet baptized, the nation in general is Christian, the people all profess Christ's religion, and have it established among them by civil laws and sanctions : they are all admitted into Christ's Church and hope to be saved in it : they all believe him to be the only Saviour of the world, and therefore expect salvation only from him. They all know too, or at least have heard, that he instituted this holy sacrament, and commanded them to receive it in remembrance of him : and yet after all, they regard it no more than as if it had never been instituted by him, no more than as if it was no matter whether they ever remembered him or no. I need not go far for instances. In this place where it is as constantly administered, and as much frequented as in any part of the kingdom, there are several who receive it but very seldom ; some never, unless it be to qualify them for an office ; many, a great many I fear of those who are now present, never yet re-



ceived it at all : but though they be twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years old, and upwards, yet have lived all this while in the neglect of this divine institution, having never been so much as once at our Lord's table, nor knowing what it is to partake of that most blessed body and blood which was broken and shed for them. And so it is in all parts of the kingdom, which is a very sad and melancholy consideration. They who have any love either for God or their neighbors, cannot but be grieved at their hearts to think of it. We have only one Saviour in the world, and he hath instituted only one sacrament to put us always in mind of him, and yet that people, that Christians should slight that ! What shall I say ? I know not how to express their folly and ingratitude, much less the dismal consequences of it. But how to remedy it, I know not. I have done what I could : I have taken all occasions to convince you of your sin and danger in neglecting this blessed sacrament, and to persuade you to a

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more frequent receiving of it, but I see nothing will do : indeed nothing can do it, but the Almighty power of God, whom I therefore beseech of his infinite mercy, to open men's eyes, that they may see the things that belong to their everlasting peace, before they be hid from them. And then I am sure this sacrament would be as much frequented, as it hath been hitherto neglected. But seeing he is usually pleased to do this great work by the ministry of his word, I shall make it my business at this time, in his name, to put you in mind of your duty and interest in this particular, and so set before you such reasons why you ought to take all opportunities of receiving the mystical body and blood of Christ your Saviour, as I hope by his blessing may prevail with many to do it : God grant it may do so with all that hear me at this time.

For this purpose, therefore, I desire you to consider, first, that this is Christ's own institution and command. He, "who being in the

form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, and yet made himself of no reputation for your sakes." He, who loved you so as to give himself for you. He, who laid down his own life to redeem and save you. He, the very night before he died for you, He then instituted this holy sacrament, and He then said to all that hope to be saved by him, and to you among others, "Do this in remembrance of me." And "do this as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me;" what? and will you that hope to be saved by him, will you never do this at all? Or only now and then when perhaps you have nothing else to do? How then can ye hope to be saved by Him? Do ye think that He will save you, whether ye observe his commands or no? And which of all his commands can ye ever observe, if ye do not observe this, which is so plain, so easy, so useful, and so necessary for you? No, deceive not yourselves: he that came into the world, and died on purpose to save you, ye may be

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confident would never have required you to do this, and as often as you do it to remember Him, but that it is necessary for your salvation that ye do it, and that ye do it as often as ye can in remembrance of Him. And if it had been necessary in no other, as it is in many respects, yet his very commanding it makes it so to you, and to your salvation. For as He is the only “author of eternal salvation,” He is so only to “those who obey Him,” Heb. v. 9, that is, “to those who observe all things whatsoever He hath commanded,” Matt. xxviii. 20. But this is one of those things which he hath commanded; and therefore unless you do this, you do not obey him, and so have no ground to expect salvation from him. He himself hath told you in effect that he will not save you, in that he said, “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish,” Luke xiii. 3, 5. But ye all know that he who lives in any wilful and known sin, or in the wilful neglect of any known duty, he hath not yet repented, and

turned to God, but is still in his natural estate, in a state of sin and damnation. And if he happens to do so, he must inevitably perish; there is no help in the world for it.

Wherefore, my brethren, ye had need look about you. Christ your Saviour hath expressly commanded you often to receive the sacrament of his body and blood in remembrance of Him. And therefore you who never yet received it, have lived all this while in the wilful breach of a known law, and by consequence in a wilful and known sin: and you who receive it but seldom, do not fully obey or come up to the law, which plainly requires you to do it often: at least if it may be had. It is true, should God in his providence cast you upon a place, where you could not receive it if you would, I do not doubt but he would accept of your earnest desires of it, as well as if ye did receive it, and would make up the great losses you sustained in your spiritual estate for want of it some other way. But blessed be

His great name, this is not your case. For he in his good providence hath so ordered it, that you live in a place where this holy sacrament is actually celebrated every Lord's day, and may be so, if there be occasion, every day in the year. Our Church requires the first, and hath provided for the other, by ordering that the same collect, epistle, and gospel which is appointed for the *Sunday*, shall serve all the week after: and by consequence the whole communion service, of which they are a part. And therefore unless you receive it, and receive it often too, you live in the gross neglect, if not in a plain contempt of Christ's command; as you will one day find to your shame and sorrow. For how well soever ye may otherwise live, this one sin is enough to ruin and destroy you for ever. For as *St. James* saith, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," Jam. ii. 10. And therefore whatsoever else ye do, if ye do not this, but offend in this one point, you are



liable to all the punishments that are threatened in the law of God. Neither is there any way to avoid them, except you repent and turn from this, as well as from all other sins.

And that ye may not think that the receiving of this blessed sacrament only now and then, as perhaps two or three times a year, will excuse you from the imputation of living in the neglect of Christ's command; I desire you to consider how the Apostles themselves and the primitive Christians understood it. Which they sufficiently declared by their practice. For when our Lord was gone to heaven, and had, according to his promise, sent down the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, and by that means brought into this Church about three thousand souls in one day, it is said of them, "That they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer," Acts ii. 42. And of all that believed, it is said, "That they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from



house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," v. 46. Where we may observe, *first*, that by breaking of bread in the New Testament is always meant the administration of the Lord's Supper. *Secondly*, this they are said to have done, κατ' ὄικον, from house to house, as the *Syriac* and *Arabic* versions have it, and as the phrase κατ' ὄικον is used by the Apostle himself, Rom. xvi. 5, 1 Cor. xvi. 19; that is, they did it either in some private house, where there was a Church, or more probably in some of the houses or chambers belonging to the temple, where they daily continued. *Thirdly*, as they continued daily in the temple, at the hours of prayer, to perform their solemn devotions there, so they daily received the holy sacrament, and ate this spiritual food *with gladness and singleness of heart*. This being indeed the chief part of their devotions; whensoever they could meet together to perform them. Especially upon the Lord's day, as the Holy Ghost himself informs

us, saying, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, being ready to depart on the morrow," Acts xx. 7, where we see they did not only break bread, or administer the sacrament of our Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week, which we from *St. John* call the *Lord's day*, but upon the day they came together for that end and purpose. It is true, *St. Paul* being to go away next day, he took that opportunity when they were met together for that end, to give them a sermon. But that was not the end of their meeting together at that time. They did not come to hear a sermon, though *St. Paul* himself was to preach, but they came together to administer and receive Christ's mystical body and blood, which plainly shows that this was the great work they did every Lord's Day: and that they came together then on purpose to meet with Christ and to partake of him at his own table. And seeing that the law itself

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required, "that none should appear before the Lord empty," Exod. xxiii. 15, therefore *St. Paul* requires, that upon the first day of the week, when Christians thus met together to receive the Sacrament, "every one should lay by him in store," as God prospered him, for pious and charitable uses, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. And hence proceeded that custom which is still continued in our Church, and ought to be so in all, that whensoever we appear before the Lord at his own table, we, every one according to his ability, offer up something to him, of what he hath bestowed upon us, as our acknowledgment of his bounty to us, in giving us whatsoever we have, and of his infinite mercy in giving himself for us.

Now seeing the Apostles themselves, and such as they first converted and instructed in the faith of Christ, usually received this holy sacrament every day in the week, and constantly upon the Lord's day, it cannot be doubted, but that they looked upon themselves as obliged by

Christ's command to do so ; and that when he said, *Do this, as oft as ye do it in remembrance of me*, his meaning and pleasure was, *that they should often do it, as often as they met together to perform their public devotions to him, if it was possible, or at least upon the Lord's day.* And as this was the sense wherein the Apostles understood our Saviour's words ; so they transmitted the same together with the faith, to those who succeeded them. For *Tertullian*, who lived in the next century after the Apostles, saith, that the sacrament of the *Eucharist*, *in omnibus mandatum a Domino, etiam antelucanis cætibus*, was commanded by our Lord, to be celebrated in all Christian assemblies, even those which were held before day. *Ter. de cor. mil. cap. 3.* And before him *Pliny* the second, who was contemporary with *St. John*, in the account he gave of the Christian's manners to the emperor *Trajan*, saith among other things, " That they were wont upon a certain day, to meet together before it was light, and to bind themselves by a

sacrament, not to do any ill thing," Plin. Ep. 1, 10, cap. 97. Which can be understood only of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as administered and received by them upon the Lord's day. And *Justin Martyr* himself, who lived in the next age after, in the apology he wrote to *Antoninus Pius*, in behalf of the Christians, giving a particular account of what they did in their public congregations, saith, that τῇ τε ἡλίας λεγομένῃ ἡμερᾷ upon that which is called the day of the sun, or *Sunday*, all Christians that live either in the cities, or in the country, meet together: where they hear the writings of the Prophets and Apostles read, and an exhortation made to them: and then they having all joined together in their common prayers, bread and wine is brought and consecrated, or blessed by the president or minister; and distributed to every one there present, and carried by deacons to such as were absent. Καὶ ἡ διὰδοσις καὶ ἡ μετάληψις ἀπὸ τῶν εὐχαριστηθέντων ἐκάσῳ γίνεται. And the distribution and participation of

the consecrated elements is made to every one. *Just. Mart. Apol. 2.* And this food, saith he, *Καλεῖται παρ' ἡμῶν Ἐυχαριστία*, is called by us the *Eucharist*. From whence it appears, that in these days, every one that was at prayers and sermon, received also the holy sacrament, at least upon the Lord's day. None offered to go out till that was over: or if they did so, they were cast out of the Church, as not worthy to be called Christians; as appears from the Apostolical canons made or collected much about that time, or soon after: one whereof runs thus, *Πάντας τῆς εἰσιόντας πιξέας*, &c. All believers that come to Church and hear the Scriptures, but don't stay to join in the prayers, and the holy communion, ought to be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church, *Can. Apos. 9.* It was then, it seems, reckoned a great disorder and confusion for any to go out of the Church, as they now commonly do, till the whole service, of which the communion was the principal part, was all over: and if any did



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so, they were judged unfit to come to Church or keep company with Christians any longer. This was the discipline of the primitive and apostolic Church. This was the piety of the first Christians: and it continued, in a great measure, for some ages, as might easily be shown. But this may be sufficient at present to prove, that the Apostles and primitive Christians did not think that they observed our Lord's command in the institution of this holy sacrament aright, by receiving it only now and then. For as they would never have done it at all, but only in obedience unto that command, so in obedience to that command, they took all opportunities they could get of doing it; at least they never omitted it upon the Lord's day. But upon that day, whatsoever they did besides, they always did this in remembrance of what their great Lord and Saviour had done for them. And if we desire to be such Christians as they were, we must do as they did. We must after their pious example observe our Lord's command by



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eating this bread and drinking this cup as often as we can ; lest otherwise we lose the benefit of that death He suffered for us, by our neglecting to do what he hath commanded in remembrance of it. And verily to remember Christ and his death is a thing of far greater consequence than people are commonly aware of. The people of God under the law, by his own appointment, had it typified and represented to them every day in the year, by having *two lambs* offered up for a burnt-offering, the *one* in the *morning*, and the *other* in the *evening*, as a type of that *Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*, Exod. xxix. 28, Num. xxviii. 3, John i. 29. These were offered every day besides the sin-offerings, peace-offerings, trespass-offerings, and such like, as were offered upon particular occasions. Wherefore these two lambs were called the *continual burnt-offering*, as being continually offered every day in the week. And upon the Sabbath day there were two more added, Num. xxviii. 9. So that upon

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every Sabbath day in the year there were four lambs offered, that they might be sure at least upon that day, to think of that grand sacrifice which was to be offered up for them. And it may not be amiss to observe, that every one of those lambs had a meat-offering and a drink-offering to attend it. A meat-offering made of flour, and the drink-offering of wine ; which are both the same elements which Christ himself instituted to signify his body and blood. And besides the burnt-offerings, meat-offerings and drink-offerings every Sabbath day, the high-priest was to set the shew-bread upon the holy table, and to put frankincense thereon ; which was to continue there before the Lord till the next Sabbath, when the priests had ate the bread, and burnt the frankincense LAZEKARAH *for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord*, Levit. ii. 4. 5, &c., Exod. xxv. 30. All which, as most things in the *levitical* law had doubtless some respect or other to Christ : as is intimated in the law itself, where it is said,

that this shall be done by an *everlasting covenant*, Levit. xxiv. 9, even that which is founded in Christ. The bread (consisting of twelve loaves or cakes, according to the number of the tribes of *Israel*, and of Christ's Apostles) was set upon the table in two rows: which might put us in mind of the two natures in Christ, *the bread of life which came down from heaven*, John vi. 33, 35. In *Hebrew* this is called *lachen panim*, *the bread of the face*, because it was to be set before the face of God, *continually*, Exod. xxv. 30, as Christ *continually appeareth in the presence of God for us*, Heb. ix. 24. Upon this bread was laid pure frankincense, called in *Hebrew* *libhonah* (*Olibanum*) from its whiteness; by reason whereof it was used in sacrifices as a symbol of God's pardoning of sin, as it was likewise of his acceptance of what was done, by the sweet scent it had made when burnt. This was laid upon the bread, to be to it for a memorial, as the *Hebrew* words signify, to call to remembrance the offering made by fire unto the Lord; that

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is, the death of Christ, typified by all such offerings. The bread was to be eaten, not burnt : but the pure frankincense that was laid upon it, was to be burnt, and by its sweet smell call to mind the death of Christ, by virtue whereof God smells a sweet savor, or accepts of the sacrifices and services we offer and perform to him, 1 Pet. ii. 5. And all this was to be done, the bread to be eaten, the frankincense burnt, and new put in their places every sabbath day throughout the year ; that upon that day especially men might be put in mind of their Saviour, and accordingly act their faith on him for their pardon and acceptance with God.

There were many such ways whereby the people of God in those days were constantly put in mind of what the Saviour of the world was to do and suffer for them. All which are now laid aside, and only this one sacrament of his last supper instituted by himself in the room of them. This is now our *Christian shew-bread*, whereby we show the *Lord's death till he come*. This is

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our burnt-offering, our sin-offering, our trespass-offering, our thank-offering, our meat-offering, our drink-offering, and all the offerings required of us, whereby to commemorate our blessed Saviour, and what he hath done for us. And therefore, as the *Jews* were punctual and constant in observing all things prescribed to them for the same end, we certainly ought to do this as often as we can; this one thing which answers the end of all their offerings, and yet hath neither the trouble, nor the charges, nor the difficulty of any one of them.

Especially considering that God would never have appointed so many ways whereby to put them in mind of their Saviour, but that it was necessary for them to have him always in their minds. And it must needs be as necessary for us, as it was for them; otherwise, he who came into the world on purpose to save us, would never have commanded us to eat this bread and drink this cup in remembrance of him. But he hath commanded us not only to

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do it, but to do it for this very end, that we may remember him. And therefore we may be confident, that to remember him, is very necessary to our being saved by him ; and by consequence, that all who desire to be so in good earnest, must do this so often, as to keep him always fresh in their minds and memories. And the reason is plain ; for all the promises of salvation by Christ are made only to those who believe in him : but this believing in him, is not a transient act, or a thing to be done only once or twice : but it is to be the continual work and employment of our lives. As we must constantly believe what he hath taught, so we must constantly trust and depend on him for all things necessary to our salvation, according to the promises that he hath made us. He that does not do this cannot be truly said to believe in Christ at all : or at least, not to any purpose. But it is impossible for us thus constantly to believe in Christ, without keeping him always in our minds. And it is as impos-



sible for us to keep him thus always in our minds, without frequent receiving of this holy sacrament : if we could have done so without it, Christ would never have appointed this sacrament to put us in mind of him ; for he need not have done it.

The plain case is this : there is no way whereby it is possible for any of us to be saved, but by Jesus Christ ; nor by him, without believing in him. And therefore we had need use all the means we can for the exercising our faith in him, and keeping it always fixed upon him. But we can by no means do it so effectually, as by the frequent receiving of that holy sacrament which he himself ordained for that very purpose, that we might remember him so as to believe and trust on him for all things relating to our salvation. For he hath so ordered it, that this sacrament doth not bring him into our remembrance only in a slight and superficial manner, without making any impression upon our minds : but it exhib-



its and presents him to our very eyes as dying for our sins, or, to use the Apostle's words, "herein Jesus Christ is evidently set forth before our eyes, as crucified among us," Gal. iii. 1, whereby our minds are deeply affected, and our faith confirmed in him. All the promises which God hath made us in Christ being hereby sealed as it were and delivered to us in his blood. As the sacrament of circumcision is said to be a *a token of the covenant betwixt God and man*, Gen. xvii. 11, and a *seal of the righteousness of faith*, Rom. iv. 11, so the sacrament of the Lord's Supper both signifies and seals to us the covenant of grace founded in the death of Christ, there represented before our eyes; whereby our faith is strengthened, and we are able to look upon ourselves as entitled to, and interested in all the blessings which are promised in the said covenant, by the means of that body and blood which we there behold as broken and shed for us. For which purpose also Christ himself in the institution of it calls

the signs by the name of the thing signified, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you, and this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." 1 Cor. xi. 24, Matt. xxvi. 28. Whereby he fully assures us, that this is not common bread and wine, but his own body and blood, not in a carnal but in a spiritual or sacramental sense: so that by eating this bread and drinking this cup, we partake of his body and blood to all intents and purposes for which the one was broken and the other shed: and that too as much or rather more than we could have done it by eating his very body and drinking his very blood in a carnal and literal sense. To the same purpose is that of the Apostle, "the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1. Cor. x. 16. Though it be not his very body and blood itself, it is the communion of them, they are both

communicated to us, so that, if we receive them as we ought by faith, we attain the end wherefore his body was broken and his blood shed, even the remission of our sins. Which is therefore particularly mentioned by himself in the institution of the cup.

And this is that which our church teacheth in her catechism, saying, *That the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper*: by the faithful: by such as have, and act true faith, which, as the Apostle saith, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." By such the body and blood of Christ is verily and indeed received: and only by such. Others see nothing there but bread and wine; but they who have such a faith in Christ's word, by it see his body and blood there: their faith itself being the very evidence thereof to them. The elements are not transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ, as the Papists absurdly imagine: but the substance of the

bread and wine still continues the same : and therefore without faith no man can receive any more than plain, though consecrated, bread and wine. But they who have, and at the same time act that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, do by that verily and indeed receive the body and blood of Christ, according to his word, when he said, *This is my body, and this is my blood.* This Christ said : and this they believe : and by their believing it, have it verified to them. It is to them that body which was broken, and that blood which was shed for their sins. They receive it as such upon Christ's word : and accordingly partake of all the merits of it : whereby their sins are as fully remitted to them, as if they themselves had already undergone all the punishments which the law had threatened against them. For Christ having undergone them all in their stead ; and he having now communicated that body and blood in which he did it, unto them ; and they having by faith accordingly received it, the law is

now satisfied as to them, and can no more require that they should suffer the punishments which were due unto their sins, than it can require that Christ's body and blood which they have received, should be broken and shed again for them.

And as Christ here puts us upon the exercise of our faith, by calling what we receive, his own body and blood ; so he doth likewise by offering and applying it particularly unto us. Saying, in the very institution, to the Apostles, and in them to every sound member of his Church, *This is my body which is given for you,* and *This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you,* Luke xxii. 19, 20. And, therefore, in the distribution both of the bread and cup, according to the order of our Church, the minister saith to every particular communicant, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul to everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee."

And so in the cup. "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee." Which is much to be observed, as being of mighty use to the right exercising our faith in Christ, and so to our obtaining pardon and salvation by him. For Christ is said to have died for mankind in general, and all the promises in him are made not to this or that particular person, but to all that believe. And so every one is left to apply them as well as he can to himself. But now in this holy sacrament this is done to our hands. For here Christ himself by his minister assures every particular person singly and by himself, that his body was given for him, and His blood was shed for him or for her, which is an extraordinary help to our faith. For by this means every one upon the receipt of the holy sacrament hath a fair occasion, yea reason given him, to think thus with himself.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. Blessed be God, blessed be the eternal Son of God, he himself



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is become my Saviour. He loved me, and gave himself for me, even for me also, the unworthiest of all his creatures. His body was broken, his blood was shed for me, and he hath now given it to me, that my sins may be pardoned, and that my soul may be saved by it. What then if my sins be many? what if my sins be great? I confess they are so, they are very many, and they are very great. But I am truly humbled for them, I heartily repent of them, I steadfastly resolve by God's assistance never to return any more unto them, but to spend the rest of my life wholly in his service and to his honor. What then need I fear? Shall I fear the curse of the law? my Saviour hath redeemed me from it, being made a curse for me. Shall I feel shame, or pain, or death itself? my Saviour hath suffered them all for me, so that none of them can now come near to hurt me. Shall I fear that sin will still have dominion over me? my Saviour hath overcome it, and his grace shall be sufficient for me.



Shall I fear the powers of hell? my Saviour hath triumphed over them all, and will enable me to do so too. Shall I fear the wrath of God? my Saviour hath appeased it with his own blood, and so hath restored me to his love and favor. For he died for me. He himself hath now told me so: and therefore I believe it, and am now persuaded, that 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord,' Rom. viii. 38, 39."

Now seeing the receiving of the sacrament of his last supper, conduceth so very much both to the exercising and strengthening our faith in our blessed Saviour, we who can never be saved without believing in him, cannot surely but acknowledge that it is as much our interest, as it is our duty, to receive it as often as we can. For my own part, I do not see how it is possible for us to live either so comfortably or

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so piously, as becometh those who expect salvation by Christ, without it. For, first, we cannot but be all conscious to ourselves of the many sins and failures that we are continually subject to through the whole course of our lives. There is not a day passeth over our head without doing something we ought not to do, or else not doing something which we ought. Our thoughts, our affections, our words, our actions, are all one way or other faulty. The very best works we do, have something that is not good in them. So that every day we contract new guilt, and have more sins to answer for, than we had the day before. But every sin that we commit, exposeth us to the wrath of the Almighty God, and makes us obnoxious to all the curses which he hath threatened in his Word. The thoughts whereof cannot but often cut us to the heart, and make us cry out with *David*, *mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me to bear*, Ps. xxxviii. 4. But

what then shall we do? whither shall we go for ease? where can we find any rest and quiet for our troubled minds? nowhere certainly so well as at our Lord's table. It is only He that can give rest unto our souls, and it is there He doth it most effectually. For He there acquaints us that He himself hath borne the punishment of our sins, and shows us how He did it, even by giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for them. We there see that the Son of God died for the sins of the world, and for ours among the rest. Yea, He there tells us He did so, by saying, *Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you, and this is my blood which is shed for you*, for you and for your sins as well as for any other. As if he should say to every particular person by himself, behold and see what I have done, and what I have suffered for thee. It was for thee that I assumed a human body and blood. And this body I gave to be broken, this blood I gave to be shed for thee, and I now give it to thee for

the expiation of thy sins. Therefore be of good cheer, my son, thy sins are pardoned. Only be not faithless but believing.

He that thinks not this to be a great comfort, must needs be very much hardened in his sins, so as not to feel the burden of them. For he that doth that, as all true penitents be sure do, cannot but be highly pleased with any assurance that can be given him, that his sins are pardoned: much more with the greatest he can ever have on this side heaven, even that which is given in the holy sacrament, where his pardon is sealed with the blood of Christ, and delivered to him by his officers. And therefore such a one cannot but be always longing for an opportunity of receiving it, and embrace it with all his heart wheresoever it comes: although it be every day in the week, as the primitive Christians had it, for this very reason, even because of their daily sins, as *St. Cyprian* informs us, *de Orat. Dom.* But in our age the case is altered. Once a week is now

thought too much. And I do not deny, but that they who can live a whole week together without sin, may not have so much need of receiving it so often. But where shall we find such a man? not among us be sure. We all know that we sin in thought, word, or deed, every day in the week, if not every hour in the day too. And therefore, if we have any care of our souls, if any true sorrow for our sins, if any desire to obtain the pardon of them from the hands of God, we must catch at all the opportunities we can get of receiving that blessed sacrament where it is offered to us by Christ himself, and that too upon the most easy terms that can be imagined, nothing but repentance and faith in Him.

Neither is this all. For we are sensible, not only of our manifold sins, but likewise of the cause or occasion of them, even the corruption of our nature: which is so very much disordered and out of tune, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of our-

selves, much less to do anything that is truly good, but when we would do good, evil is present with us, and spoils all we do : so that we may every one say, with St. Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. For to-will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not, Rom. vii. 18. But how to perform that which is evil, we all find. We all find that very easy and natural to us. Our thoughts are always running after it, our hearts inclined to it ; and do what we can by our own strength, some sin or other is apt to get dominion over us, and to reign in our mortal bodies. Yea, though "we delight," as the same Apostle speaks, "in the law of God after the inward man, yet we see another law in our members, warring against the law of our minds, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members," v. 22, 23. And if we be really concerned as we ought to be for the glory of God, and for our own good, this must



needs be the greatest trouble we can have in this world, and make us cry out, every one in the bitterness of his soul, as he did, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" v. 24. But then we may say also, as he doth in the next words, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," v. 25. He can deliver us, and will too, if we do but apply ourselves aright unto him for it. But for that purpose there is nothing like to the frequent receiving his blessed body and blood. Our very preparation for that holy sacrament, by recollecting our sins, by considering what we have deserved, and what our Saviour suffered for them, and by examining our repentance of them, whether it be sincere or no, doth of itself contribute very much to the taking off our affections from them, and to the putting us upon constant endeavors to forsake and avoid them. And so do the impressions also which the solemn administration of so divine an ordinance makes, and leaves upon our



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minds afterwards, by setting before us the death which the Son of God suffered for our sins, and assuring us of pardon if we repent of them. By which means they who frequently receive this holy sacrament, as suppose every Lord's day, are always kept upon their guard, between the preparations they make for it, and the impressions that are made upon them by it. Which, if duly observed, must needs meet together, and so give them no time to indulge themselves in any vice or wickedness. For being to receive it upon the Lord's day, they cannot surely but think of it, and prepare themselves for it, two or three days before; and when they have been there, they cannot but remember what they saw and heard, and did there, at least three or four days after, and so to the time when they are to prepare themselves again for it. Whereby their minds are piously disposed and employed all the week, either about what they did the Sunday before, or what they are to do the Sunday following.

Which must needs conduce very much to the arming them against all temptations, to the preventing their falling into any gross sin, and to the keeping them continually in a holy and devout temper.

But that which doth it most effectually of all, is the ghostly strength they receive at the sacrament itself. Where, as our Church rightly observes and asserts in her catechism, “ Our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.” Meat and drink we know are by God’s own appointment the common supports of human life. Of all meats, bread is reckoned the most strengthening ; of all drinks, wine is the most refreshing. Now as our bodies are strengthened and refreshed by these which are there used as the outward part or sign of the Lord’s Supper : so are our souls by the thing signified by them, even by the body and blood of Christ, which, as I have shown, are there *verily and indeed taken and*

*received by the faithful.* It is a great refreshment to our souls, as we have seen already, to have the pardon of our sins sealed and delivered to us, as it is there, in the blood of Christ. And our souls are as much strengthened by the grace of God which always follows upon his pardon and reconciliation to us, and accompanieth the body and blood of Christ, wheresoever it is. And therefore all who duly receive it, do thereby receive it from him, and *grace for grace*, John i. 16, and so go from strength to strength, till they come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 13.

Let us hear what He himself saith, *I am the bread of life*, saith He, *he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst*, John vi. 35. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*, v. 51. Whoso-

*ever eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life : for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed : he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me, v. 54, 55, 56, 57. But then he adds afterwards, it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life, v. 63. As if he had said, all that I have now spoken is to be understood in a spiritual sense, and of a spiritual life. I am the life of your souls : it is by my body and my blood that your souls are quickened, nourished, strengthened and preserved to eternal life.*

For this we have Christ's own word, and therefore may be confident, that as it is by Him only that we can be regenerate and born again to a new and spiritual life : so it is by Him only that this new and spiritual life can be maintained and excited in us, so as to put forth

and manifest itself in our actions. *Without him we can do nothing*, as he himself said, John xv. 5. *But we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us*,<sup>e</sup> as his Apostle found by experience, Phil. iv. 13. But he strengthens none but those who believe in him, and therefore only because they do so. For it is by our believing in him that we are made members of his body, and so receive strength and nourishment from him our head. And according as our faith is stronger or weaker, so is the strength we receive from him more or less. And therefore the holy sacrament being the most sovereign means for the confirming our faith in him, our souls must needs be very much strengthened and refreshed by it. For we there receive the proper food of our souls, the bread of life, and the water of life, the blessed body and blood of Christ himself. And if his body and blood, then his Spirit too, which is always with them; that Holy Spirit which purifies our hearts, which sanctifies our

nature, which worketh in us both to will and to do, which strengthens and enables us to overcome the world, to withstand temptations, to mortify our sins, to do our whole duty both to God and man, and so *offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ our Lord*, 1 Peter ii. 5.

From hence therefore we may see the great advantage, if not the necessity, of frequent communion. We all know that our bodies cannot subsist long, but very few days, without food ; and why should we think that our souls should do so better than our bodies ? We all find by daily experience, that our souls are altogether as frail and infirm as our bodies are ; subject to as many distempers ; and every way as apt to decay, to grow faint and feeble, unable to walk at all in the narrow path that leads to life, without stumbling or at least reeling to one side or other, unless they be always kept in good plight, nourished and strengthened with such food as is proper for them. And certain-



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ly we have as much reason at least, to take care of our immortal souls, to preserve their life, and health, and vigor, as we have to look after those lumps of clay which ere long must crumble into dust. But as for our bodies we feed them every day, several times a day, and that too with the best that we can get for them. And shall we think once a week too often to feed our souls? And where shall we get such proper food for them as that which God himself hath provided, even the blessed body and blood of his dear Son? Which is so nourishing, so strengthening, so refreshing to our souls, that the primitive Christians, by the frequent use of it, were able and ready every moment, not only to do, but to suffer cheerfully whatsoever could be laid upon them, even death itself, for the sake of Christ. But the sacrament is the same still as it was then. And if we could use it as constantly as they did, we might live as they lived, and die too, if God should be pleased to honor us so far as to call us to it, for his



sake who died for us, and whose death we there commemorate.

Wherefore, as ever we desire to be strong in faith ; and zealous for the honor of God. As we desire *to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*. As we desire to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. As we desire to live above this world, so as not to be ensnared or overpowered by anything that is in it. As we desire that the power of Christ should always rest upon us, and enable us to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. In short, as we desire by his assistance, both to live the life and to die the death of the righteous, we must often eat this bread and drink this cup, and bless God for all opportunities that we can get to do it.

These are some of the many arguments and reasons that might be produced for frequent communion. What effect they will have upon those that hear them, I know not ; but fear that it will be much the same that reason and argu-

ment usually have upon the greatest part of mankind : that is very little or none at all. But for mine own part, when I seriously consider these things, I cannot but wonder with myself, how it comes to pass, that this holy sacrament, instituted by Christ himself, is so much neglected and disused as it is, in a place where his religion is professed and acknowledged to be, as really it is, the only true religion in the world. And after all my search, I can resolve it into nothing else but the degeneracy of the age we live in, and the great decay of that most holy religion among us. I am sure from the beginning it was not so. For some ages after the first establishment of the Christian religion, by Christ our Saviour, so long as they who embraced it, gave themselves up to the conduct of that Holy Spirit which he sent down among them, and were inspired by it with true zeal for God, and inflamed with love to their ever blessed Redeemer, so as to observe all things that he had commanded

whatsoever it cost them, then they never met together upon any day in the week, much less upon the Lord's day, for the public worship of God, but they all received this holy sacrament, as the principal business they met about, and the most proper Christian service they could perform. And it is very observable, that so long as this continued, men were endued with the extraordinary gifts as well as with the graces of God's Holy Spirit, so as to be able to do many wonderful things by it: yea and suffer too whatsoever could be inflicted on them for Christ's sake. But in process of time men began to leave off their first love to him, and to turn his religion into dispute and controversy; and then as their piety and devotion grew cooler and cooler, the holy sacrament began to be neglected more and more, and the priests who administered it had fewer and fewer to receive it, until at length they had, sometimes, none at all. But still they mistook themselves to be obliged in duty and conscience

to consecrate and receive it themselves, although they had none to receive it with them. And this mistake, I suppose, gave the first occasion to that multitude of private masses which have been so much abused in the Church of *Rome*, where the priest commonly receives himself, although he hath never a one to communicate with him: and so there can be no communion at all. And as that abuse, so the disuse of the holy sacrament sprang first from men's coldness and indifference in religion, which hath prevailed so far in our days, that there are many thousands of persons who are baptized, and live many years in the profession of the Christian religion, and yet never received the sacrament of Christ's body and blood in all their lives. And but very few that receive it above once or twice a year, which is a great reproach and shame to the age we live in; but none at all to the Church: for she is always ready to administer it, if people could be persuaded to come to it. But that they cannot,

or rather will not be. They have still one pretence or other to excuse themselves, but none that will excuse them before God and their own consciences another day.

What their pretences are, I shall not undertake to determine. They are so many, that they cannot easily be numbered. And many of them so vain and trifling, that they are not worth rehearsing. But the bottom of them all is this, men renounced the world, the devil, and the flesh, in their baptism, but they are loth to do it in their lives : they then promised to serve God, but now they find something else to do. They have all one sin or other that reigns over them, and captivates their hearts and affections, so that they cannot endure the thoughts of parting with it. And they think, as they ought to do, that if they come to the holy sacrament, they must first examine themselves, repent of all their sins, turn to God, renew their baptismal vow, and resolve to lead a new life. But this they are resolved not to do.

And if they should come to the sacrament, it would but disturb their quiet, make them uneasy in their minds, and hinder them from enjoying the pleasure they were wont to take in their sins. And for their part, they had rather displease God than themselves; and neglect their duty rather than leave their sins. And so add sin to sin, and *Treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* This is plainly the case of most of those who live in the neglect of this holy commandment. And what can be said to such men? So long as such, they are not fit to come to the communion. And, therefore, all that can be said to them is only to beg of them to consider their condition before it be too late, and to repent as soon as they can; lest they die, as they have lived, in sin, and so be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

But there are others who do receive the

sacrament of Christ's body and blood sometimes, as perhaps two or three times in a year : and my charity prompts me to believe that they would do it oftener, if they thought it to be their duty. But there are some things which at first sight may seem, at least to them, to plead their excuse, and, therefore, deserve to be duly considered by us. As, *first*, they say, our Church requires them only to receive three times a year : and they do not question but she would oblige them to receive it oftener, if it was necessary. This is a mistake that a great many have fallen into, and by that means have been kept from the sacrament, more than otherwise they would have been. I call it a mistake : for it is so, and a very great one. For as in all things else, so particularly in this, our Church keeps close to the pattern of the apostolic and primitive Church ; when, as I have before observed, the Lord's Supper was administered, and received commonly every day in the week, but most constantly upon the Lord's



day. And our Church supposeth it to be so still, and therefore hath accordingly made provision for it. Which that I may fully demonstrate to you, it will be necessary to inquire into the sense and practice of our Church in this point all along from the beginning of the Reformation, or to speak more properly, from the time when she was restored to that apostolical form which she is now of, as she was at first; which we date from the reign of king *Edward VI.*

For in the first year of that pious prince, the liturgy, or book of common prayer, was first compiled, and in the second it was settled by act of parliament. In which book it is ordered that the exhortation to those who are minded to receive the sacrament shall be read: which is there set down, much the same that we read now. But afterwards, it is said, "In cathedral Churches or other places, where there is daily communion, it shall be sufficient to read this exhortation above written once in a month.

And in parish Churches upon the week days, it may be left unsaid," Fol. 123. Where we may observe, first, that in those days, there was daily communion in cathedral Churches, and other places, as there used to be in the primitive Church. And accordingly I find in the records of *St. Paul's*, that when the plate, jewels, &c., belonging to the said cathedral were delivered to the king's commissioners, they, upon the dean and chapter's request, permitted to remain, among other things, "Two pair of basins for to bring the communion bread and to receive the offerings for the poor; whereof, one pair silver, for every day, the other for festivals, &c., gilt." Dugdal. Hist. of *St. Paul's*, p. 274; from whence it is plain, that the communion was then celebrated in that Church every day. And so it was in parish Churches. For, otherwise, it needed not to be ordered as it is in the rubric above mentioned, that in parish Churches upon the week days, the said exhortation may be left unsaid. And to the same purpose it is

afterwards said, "When the holy communion is celebrated on work-day or in private houses, then may be omitted the *gloria in excelsis*, the creed, the homily, and the exhortation," Fol. 132.

Next after that we quoted first, this rubric immediately follows, "And if upon the Sunday or holy-day, the people be negligent to come to the communion, then shall the priest earnestly exhort his parishioners to dispose themselves to the receiving of the holy communion more diligently," saying, &c. Which shows that upon all *Sundays* and *holy-days* people then generally received ! the Church expected and required it of them. And if any minister found that his parishioners did not always come, at least upon those days, he was to exhort and admonish them to dispose themselves more diligently for it ; and that by the command of the Church itself ; whereby she hath sufficiently declared her will and desire that all her members should receive the communion as they did in the primi-

tive times, every day in the week, if possible : and if that could not be, yet at least every *Sunday* and *holy-day* in the year.

In the rubric after the communion service, there are several things to the same purpose. For it is there ordered, that upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, *although there be none to communicate*, the priest shall say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, until after the offertory. And then it follows. "And the same order shall be used whensoever the people be customably assembled to pray in the church, and none disposed to communicate with the priest," Fol. 130. Whereby we are given to understand, that upon what day soever people came to church, the priest was to be ready to celebrate the holy sacrament if any were disposed to communicate with him. And if there were none, he was to show his readiness by reading a considerable part of the communion service.

There is another rubric in the same place

that makes it still plainer. Which I shall transcribe, because the book is not commonly to be had, neither can it be expressed better than in its words, which are these. “ Also, that the receiving of the sacrament of the blessed body and blood of Christ, may be most agreeable to the institution thereof, and to the usage of the primitive Church, in all cathedral and collegiate churches, there shall always some communicate with the priest that ministreth. And that the same may be also observed everywhere abroad in the country, some one at the least of that house in every parish, to whom by course, after the ordinance herein made, it appertaineth to offer for the charges of the communion, or some other whom they shall provide to offer for them, shall receive the holy communion with the priest : the which may be the better done, for that they know before when their course cometh, and may therefore dispose themselves to the worthy receiving of the sacrament. And

with him or them, who doth so offer the charges of the communion, all other who be then godly disposed thereunto, shall likewise receive the communion. And by this means the Minister having always some to communicate with him, may accordingly solemnize so high and holy mysteries, with all the suffrages and due order appointed for the same. And the Priest on the week-day shall forbear to celebrate the communion, except he have some that will communicate with him."

Here we see what care the Church took that the sacrament might be daily administered not only in cathedral but likewise in parish-churches. For which purpose, whereas every parishioner had before been used to find the holy loaf, as it was called, in his course, in the rubric before this, it is ordained that every pastor or curate shall find sufficient bread and wine for the communion, and that the parishioners, every one in his course, shall offer the charges of it at the offertory to the pastor or curate ;



and in this it is ordained that every such parishioner shall then in his course communicate, or else get some other person to do it, that so the communion may be duly celebrated : and all there present that were godly disposed might partake of it. Which one would have thought as good a provision as could have been made in the case. But notwithstanding, through the obstinacy or carelessness of some, in not making their said offering as they were commanded, it sometimes failed. As appears from the letter written about a year after by the privy council, and subscribed by the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and others, to the Bishops, to assure them that the King intended to go on with the reformation, wherein among other things they say ; “And farther, whereas it is come to our knowledge that divers froward and obstinate persons do refuse to pay towards the finding of bread and wine for the holy communion, according to the order prescribed in the said book, by reason whereof the holy communion



is many times omitted upon the *Sunday*. These are to will and command you to convent such obstinate persons before you, and them to admonish and command to keep the order prescribed in the said book. And if any such shall refuse so to do, to punish them by suspension, excommunication, or other *censures of the Church*." Hist. of the Reform., part 2, *Coll. P.* 192. From whence we may also learn how much they were troubled to hear that the holy sacrament was anywhere omitted even upon the *Sunday*, upon any *Sunday*; how great a fault and scandal they judged it to be, and what care they took to prevent it for the future.

This was the state of this affair at the beginning of the reformation, and it continues in effect the same to this day. About three or four years after the foresaid book of common prayer first came out, it was revised and set forth again with some alterations in the form, but none that were material in the substance of it. Only the former way of the parishioners finding bread

and wine for the communion every one in his course, being now found not so effectual as was expected, that was now laid aside, and it was ordered to be provided at the charges of the parish in general, in these words, "The bread and wine for the communion shall be provided by the curate and church-wardens at the charges of the parish : and the parish shall be discharged of such sums of money or other duties, which hitherto they have paid for the same, by order of their houses, every Sunday." Where we may take notice, that as hitherto it had been provided every *Sunday* by the houses of every parish, as they lay in order, it was now to be provided by the minister and church-warden at the charges of the whole parish, but still every *Sunday*, as it was before ; which being the most certain way that could be found out for it, it is still continued. The first part of this rubric, whereby it is enjoined, being still in force. But the latter part, from these words, "and the parish shall be discharged," &c., is

now left out, as it was necessary it should be, after the former course had been disused for above a hundred years.

Now this book of *common prayer*, which was thus settled by act of parliament in the *fifth* and *sixth* year of *Edward the Sixth*, was that which was afterwards confirmed. And this was that which was afterwards confirmed in the beginning of Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, with one alteration or addition of certain lessons to be used on every *Sunday* in the year, and the form of the litany altered and corrected, and two sentences only added in the delivery of the sacrament to the communicants. These were all the alterations that were then made, or indeed that have been ever made since that time to this, except it be in words or phrases, in the addition of some prayers, and in some such inconsiderable things, as do not at all concern our present purpose. For the care of our Church, to have the holy communion constantly celebrated, hath been the same all along, from the

time that the book of common prayer before spoken of was first settled; as may be easily proved from that which was established by the last act of uniformity. Which therefore I shall now briefly consider, so far as it relates to the business in hand: that we may understand the sense of our *Church* at present concerning it.

For this purpose therefore we must first observe that the communion service is appointed for the communion itself, and therefore called the *order for the administration of the Lord's Supper, or holy communion*. Now our Church supposing, or at least hoping, that some of her members will receive this holy communion every day, hath taken care that this service may be used every day in the week, as appears from the rubric immediately before the proper lessons, which is this, *Note also that the collect, epistle and gospel appointed for the Sunday, shall serve all the week after where it is not in this book otherwise ordered*. But the collect, epistle and gospel are part of the communion

service, for which there is no occasion on the week days, neither can it be used except the communion be administered, which therefore is here supposed to be done every day in the week. And so it is also in the celebration of the communion itself, where there are proper prefaces appointed to be used upon certain days. Upon *Christmas* day and seven days after. Upon *Easter* day and seven days after. Upon *Ascension* day, and seven days after. Upon *Whit-Sunday*, and six days after (the next day being *Trinity-Sunday*, which hath one peculiar to itself). Now to what purpose are these prefaces appointed to be used seven days together or six, none of which can be a *Sunday*, if the sacrament ought not to be administered upon all those days, and so upon week-days as well as Sundays? They are all, as I intimated before, to be used in the actual administration of it, and therefore plainly suppose it to be actually administered upon each of those days, which being for the most part

neither Sundays nor Holy-days, they most evidently demonstrate, that according to the mind and order of our Church, as well as the primitive, the Lord's Supper ought to be administered every day, that all who live as they ought, in her communion, may be daily partakers of it.

In the rules and orders (which we call the *rubric*) after the communion service, there are several things that deserve to be considered in this case. It is there ordered, that there shall be no celebration of the communion, except there be a convenient number, that is, *four*, or *three* at the least to communicate with the priest. According to which rule, although the priest have all things ready, and desires to consecrate and receive the holy sacrament himself, yet he must not do it, unless he have such a number to communicate with him, that it may be properly a communion. But, as it is there ordered, *upon the Sundays and other Holy-days (if there be no communion) shall be said all that is appointed at the communion until the end of the*



*general prayer (the good estate of the catholic Church of Christ)*, where we may observe, that the Church, as I have shown, appoints the sacrament to be administered every day. But if it so fall out that there be not in any place a convenient number to communicate with the priest, and by consequence according to the order before mentioned, no communion, yet nevertheless upon *Sundays* and other *Holy-days* so much of the communion service shall be said as is there limited. Why only upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*, but to distinguish them from other days, on which if there be a sufficient number of communicants the whole communion service is to be used ; but no part of it except there be so. But upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*, although there be not such a number, and therefore no communion, yet, however, the priest shall go up to the altar, and there read all that is appointed to be said at the communion, until the end of the prayer for Christ's *catholic Church* ; whereby the people may see, that



neither he nor the Church is to be blamed, if the holy sacrament be not then administered. Forasmuch as he is there ready by the order of the Church to do it, and goes as far as he can in the service appointed for it, without the actual administration of it: and, therefore, that the fault is wholly in themselves that it is not actually administered, because they will not make up a convenient number among them to communicate with him. Which is a most excellent order; for the people hereby have not only God's holy commandments solemnly proclaimed, the epistle and gospel for the day, the *Nicene creed*, and prayers proper for that occasion read to them, but they are likewise put in mind of their duty to their Saviour in receiving his most blessed body and blood, and upbraided with their neglect of it. For which purposes also I think it very expedient, that the order of the Church for the reading that part of the service at the communion table, even when there is no communion, be duly observed.

The next *rubric* in the same place, that concerns our present business is this, *And in all cathedral and collegiate churches, and colleges where there are many priests and deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary.* Where we see that the Church doth not command, but supposes that the sacrament is constantly administered in all such places, taking it for granted, that it is never omitted there, where there are so many persons devoted to the service of God ; but that there is always a sufficient number to communicate. But she absolutely commands, that all priests and deacons that belong to such foundations, shall receive the communion with the priest, every *Sunday* at the least, except any of them have a reasonable cause to the contrary, which the ordinary of the place, I suppose, is to be the judge of. They are bound, therefore, all and every one of them, to receive it every *Sunday* ; which, notwith-

standing they cannot do, unless it be administered every *Sunday* among them. Wherefore if there be any such places where it is not so administered, or any such persons who do not, without just cause to the contrary, receive it every *Sunday* in the year, I do not see how they can answer it to God, to the Church, or to their own consciences: neither are they bound to receive it only every *Sunday*, but every *Sunday at the least*. Which plainly supposeth that it is administered upon other days as well as *Sundays*; for otherwise they could not receive it oftener if they would. And it is to be hoped, that all such persons receive it as often as it is administered among them: but the Church expressly requires them to receive it at least every *Sunday*, so as never to omit it at least upon that day, except they have a reasonable or such a cause to the contrary as will justify their omission of it before the Church and Christ himself at the last day.

These things being thus briefly explained,

we shall easily see into the true meaning of the words that gave us the occasion to discourse of them, which are these, in the place last quoted, "And note, that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one." From whence some have been tempted to think, that the Church doth not look upon it as necessary, that they should communicate above thrice a year. I say, tempted to think so; for no man surely in his right wits can of himself draw such an inference from these words, which is so directly contrary to the sense of the Church, and hath no foundation at all in the words themselves. For the Church, as I have shown, hath taken all the care she can, that the holy sacrament should be everywhere administered, if it was possible, every day, at least every *Sunday* and *Holy-day* in the year. Which she would never have done, if she had thought it sufficient for any one to receive only thrice a year; for then all her care about the frequent

administration of it would be in vain, and to no purpose. And besides, she hath drawn up an excellent exhortation to be read by the minister of every parish, in case he sees the people negligent to come to the holy communion, beginning thus, *Dearly beloved, on ——— I intend by God's grace to celebrate the Lord's Supper.* Where we may observe, that it is not said, on such a *Sunday*, but on ——— with a blank, to show that the minister may appoint the communion on any day of the week, when he can have a sufficient number to communicate with him ; and so it is in the other exhortation, only there is a *day* put in, which may be understood of *Tuesday* or *Wednesday*, or any other day, as well as *Sunday*, for the same reason. In that first mentioned, the minister, in the words and by the order of the Church, invites all there present, and beseecheth them, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to come to the Lord's Supper. And among other things he saith to them all, " I bid you in the name of God, I call

you in Christ's behalf, I exhort you as you love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy communion." There are several such pathetic expressions in that exhortation, wherewith the Church most earnestly exhorts, adviseth, admonisheth all persons to come to this holy sacrament. And this exhortation every minister is to read publicly before all his congregation, whensoever he sees them negligent to come to it; as all are, who come but two or three times a year, where they may have it oftener if they will. They plainly live in the neglect of it, and therefore ought to have this exhortation read to them, according to the order of the Church. Whereby she hath sufficiently demonstrated, that she doth not think it enough for people generally to receive it only three times in a year; but that it is her opinion, that they ought, and her hearty desire they would receive it as often as it is, or according to her order, ought to be administered among them.



But then she wisely considers withal, that being a national Church, made up of all sorts of persons, it is necessary that her general rules and orders should be accommodated as much as possible, to the several conditions and circumstances that many of them may be sometimes in. And, therefore, although she exhorts all her members to frequent and constant communion, yet she doth not think fit to command and oblige them all under the pain of excommunication to receive oftener than three times a year, lest some might be thereby tempted to come sometimes without that preparation and disposition of mind that is requisite to the worthy partaking of so great a mystery. I say, under pain of excommunication : for that is the meaning and the effect of this law, that they who do not communicate at least three times in a year, may and ought to be cast out of the communion of Christ's Church, as no longer fit to be called Christians, seeing they live in such a gross neglect of Christ's own command,



and of that duty, whereby Christians are in an especial manner distinguished from other men. Other men, as *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Heathens*, may fast and pray, and hear sermons in their way ; but to receive the sacrament of Christ's Supper, is proper and peculiar only to Christians, or such as profess that religion which Jesus Christ hath settled in the world. And, therefore, they who receive that sacrament, do, thereby, manifest themselves to be Christians. They who do it not, make it at least doubtful whether they be Christians or no. For although they were baptized, and so made Christians once, who knows whether they have not renounced their baptism, and apostatized from the Christian religion ? They themselves, perhaps, may profess they have not ; but the Church can never know it, but hath just cause to suspect the contrary, so long as they refuse to renew the vow they made in the sacrament of baptism, by receiving that of the Lord's Supper. And the least that can be required of them for

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that purpose, is to do it three times a year ; which, therefore, the Church absolutely requires. Not that it is not necessary for them to receive it oftener in order to their salvation, but because it is necessary they should do it at least so often, that the Church may be satisfied that they continue in her communion, and constant to that religion wherein alone salvation can be had.

And hence it is, that in the rule itself, it is not said, that *every person*, but *every parishioner* shall communicate at the least three times in the year. Which, therefore, is required of all, not as they are members only of the catholic, but as they are members of a parochial Church, and they are bound by this law to do it at least so often in their own parish Church, where they are parishioners : otherwise they do not do it as parishioners, as the law requires. So that although a man communicates a hundred times in any other place, as in the cathedral, which is free to all of the diocese, or in a chapel

of ease, or in any other church, when he cannot have it at his own, this does not satisfy the law. But he must communicate at least three times in the year, as a parishioner, in his own parish Church, where there are officers, called *churchwardens*, appointed on purpose to take notice of it, and to inform the Church against him, if he neglect to do it so often as she requires; that she may use the most effectual means to bring him to repentance for his sin, and to make him more careful for the future to perform so great and necessary a duty as this is; or if he continue obstinate, cut him off from the body of Christ, as no longer worthy to be called a member of it. And, therefore, all that can be reasonably inferred from this law, is, that the Church doth not think them fit to communicate at all, who will not communicate at least three times in the year. But as for her opinion, of the necessity of communicating oftener in order to men's obtaining eternal salvation by the blood of Christ, that she hath suf-

ficiently declared, by the great care she hath taken to have this holy sacrament administered constantly as often as it was in the Apostles' and primitive times of Christianity ; that is as often as any Christian can desire to have it. For, according to the order and discipline of our Church, if a sufficient number of parishioners, against whom there is no just exception, desire to receive it every *Sunday*, or every day in the year, the Minister of their parish not only may, but, as I humbly conceive, is bound to consecrate and administer it to them. The want of such a number, being, as far as I can perceive, the only reason that can ever justify the omission of it.

I have endeavored to set this matter in as clear a light as I could, because it will discover to us several things very observable concerning the Church we live in. For hereby we see how exactly she follows the pattern of the primitive and apostolic Church in this particular, as well as others ; what great care she hath taken, that

the bread and water of life may be duly distributed to all her members whensoever they hunger and thirst after it. With how great prudence she hath so ordered it, that all may have it as often as they will, and yet none compelled to receive it oftener than it is absolutely necessary, in order to their manifesting themselves to continue in the faith of Christ. How desirous she is that all would receive it constantly, and yet how careful that none may receive it unworthily. How uniform she hath been in her orders about it all along. And by consequence what cause we all have to bless God, that we live in the communion of such a Church, and how much it behooves us to receive the holy communion of her, not only as often as she strictly commands all to receive it under the pain of excommunication, but as often as she adviseth and exhorteth us to do it in order to our eternal salvation, and as she is ready and desirous to communicate it to us. And then we should be sure to receive it as often as we are bound either

in duty to God or by our own interest to do it.

Another reason why many do not oftener eat this bread and drink this cup, is because as they pretend, they dare not, for fear of sinning against God, and incurring eternal damnation by it. For the Apostle in this very place saith, *who-soever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, v. 27. And he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body, v. 29.* But they cannot but acknowledge themselves to be unworthy of it, and if they should do it often, they might sometimes do it unworthily, and so might hazard their salvation by it. This is a mistake that many have lain under; and therefore it will be worth our while to lay it as open as we can, that people may see into the vanity and falsehood of it.

First, therefore, if there be any force in this argument against frequent communion, it holds



as well against ever communicating at all. For if every unworthy person that presumes to eat this bread, and drink this cup, and every one that doth it any way unworthily, is thereby rendered obnoxious to eternal damnation, then all would be so that ever eat and drink it at all. Forasmuch as no man is worthy of any, much less of so great a mercy as that is, neither can any man do any, much less so great a work as that is, every way so exactly as he ought. And therefore no man, according to this opinion, can ever obey this command of his Saviour, without running the hazard of losing his salvation by it. Which is such a groundless and vain conceit that I wonder how it first came into man's head. For it is the same as to imagine that he who came into the world on purpose to save us, should require us to do that in order to our salvation, which we can never do without being damned. Which is so absurd, that whatsoever is, this, be sure, cannot be the Apostle's meaning in those words.



Neither indeed can the words themselves bear any such sense, without plain force and violence put upon them. For the Apostle doth not here speak of the unworthiness of the person, but of the action. He doth not say, if any unworthy person shall eat this bread and drink this cup: for all are unworthy, and they usually the most who think themselves the least; and they the least, who think themselves the most unworthy. But he saith, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily," or after an unworthy manner, unbecoming so great and sacred a duty as that is. And what this unworthy manner of receiving the holy sacrament was, which he here speaks of, appears plainly from the context. He is here reproofing the *Corinthians* for some disorders that were among them, and particularly in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For first of all, saith he, "When ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it," v. 18. It seems there were divisions among

them, not only in other places but in the Church itself; nor at other times only, but likewise when they were receiving the holy communion itself: and then he adds, “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper: for in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not, or *are* poor?” v. 20, 21, 22. Where we may observe, that they came together, as I have observed before, to eat the Lord’s Supper, that was the end, as they pretended, of their meeting, but as they ordered the business, they did not do it. They did not eat the Lord’s Supper but their own. Some ate but little, so as to be still hungry; others ate and drank so much as to be drunken, and that in the Church itself. For that they ate their own supper there, appears from the Apostle’s calling it their own, and not the Lord’s Supper; and, also, from

his saying in the next verse, "What have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God," making as if that was but like one of your own houses where ye eat and drink every day? And lastly, from the direction he afterwards gives them how to amend this fault, saying, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another: and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation, or *judgment*, v. 33, 34. This therefore is the thing which the Apostle here condemns. They had got, it seems, a wicked custom among them to bring their own ordinary food to the church, and to eat and drink it there. And because they did it in the church they looked upon it as the Lord's Supper; or at least ate that there no otherwise than they used to eat their own at home; without showing any respect to Christ's mystical body and blood, or making any difference between his supper and their own, but only that they ate

the one in the church and the other at their own houses. Which was a great mistake, and fault; for which the Apostle meekly reproves them, saying, "What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not," v. 22. And then he gives them the reason why he could not praise, but blame them for it, even because the Lord's Supper was instituted by the Lord Christ himself, to keep up the remembrance of himself in the Church, to their ignorance of which he in great charity imputes their fault. Not doubting but that if they had known the nature and end of that holy sacrament, they would have set a greater value upon it; and therefore perceiving that they did not rightly understand what he had before delivered to them about it, he fully declares it again to them, saying, "for I have received of the Lord," &c., v. 23, 24, 25. After which, having acquainted them in my text, how this is done in remembrance of Christ, even by showing forth his death, he draws this infer-

ence from it; wherefore “whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup *of the Lord* unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” v. 27. Which therefore must needs be understood of that unworthy manner of doing it, which he before spoke of, and which gave him the occasion of saying it, even their eating this bread, and drinking this cup of the Lord after the same manner as they ate and drank at home, without expressing any reverence to the holy sacrament, or to Christ’s body and blood there represented. And therefore he saith, that “whosoever doth so, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” that is, he is guilty of profaning of Christ’s mystical body and blood, crucifying, as it were, to himself “the son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame,” Heb. vi. 6, by eating his body and drinking his blood as common things, and so exposing him to contempt and scorn.

That this is the true meaning of the phrase,

appears also from the next verse but one, where it occurs again. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body*, v. 29, not discerning, that is, not considering whose body it is, nor making any difference between that and their ordinary food. As the original word *διανοιγων* plainly imports. This therefore is *that* unworthy receiving which the Apostle here particularly condemneth ; when men come to the Lord's table and receive the outward signs of bread and wine, without discerning by faith the Lord's body signified by them, and therefore without showing any more regard and reverence to what they eat and drink there, than they do to any other meat and drink. Which horrid sin, although the *Corinthians* fell into it before they fully understood the nature and end of Christ's institution ; yet I hope few are guilty of it among us, now that the institution of this holy sacrament is so clearly delivered and explained by the Apostle



in this place. They seem to come nearest to it, who sit at the Lord's table as they do at their own, and receive Christ's body and blood with no more reverence and godly fear, than they eat and drink at home.

But that which hath frightened people most from this sacrament, is the Apostle's saying, according to our translation, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* And I confess at first sight it looks very frightfully. For it seems to imply, that whosoever receiveth the holy sacrament after an unholy manner, or any otherwise than he ought, is, *ipso facto*, damned, or adjudged to eternal punishments for it. Which, if true, would discourage all considering persons from ever receiving at all, unless they have greater assurance of their own worthiness and abilities, than can reasonably be expected in this life, or justly pretended to by any that know themselves. But our comfort is, this cannot possibly be the meaning of the words. For, besides,



that no man can receive it so worthily as he ought, and every unworthy receiving, as I have shown, is not that which the Apostle here speaks of: besides that I say, the word *Koîna* which is translated damnation in the text, in the margent of our Bibles is rendered judgment. Which shows that our translators themselves were not satisfied that the word here signified damnation, but that it might be taken in the other sense. But howsoever they put *damnation* into the text, to make people, I suppose, the more careful how they received. Not foreseeing what ill uses might be made of it: and accordingly have been so in our age. Wherein through the ignorance or indiscretion of some persons, this one word hath kept more people from the holy communion than all the commandments for it, can bring to it. Not in itself or from its own proper meaning; but by reason of the harsh sound it makes in our ears, who commonly use it for *damnation* to eternal punishments, whereas it may be applied as well to

those which are only temporal. And so it must be here. The original word *Κρίμα* signifies judgment in general ; whereby a man is adjudged to any sort of punishment. But what that is, in particular, must be determined from the circumstances of the place where it is used. As in this place the Apostle himself plainly shows what kind of judgment or damnation he means by it. For, having said, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation*, or judgment, *to himself* ; he immediately adds, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, v. 30. From whence it is easy to suppose, that some epidemical distemper at that time raged at *Corinth*, particularly among the Christians of which many died, and others, though they escaped death, yet continued weak and sickly for some time after. This the Apostle ascribes to the judgment of God upon them, for their unworthy and profane eating and drinking Christ's mystical body and blood, as if it had been common

food. *For this cause*, saith he, *many are weak and sickly among you, &c.* And therefore this must needs be the judgment which he here means. But this is so far from eternal damnation, that it is usually inflicted on purpose to prevent that. And that it was so at this time, appears from what follows. *For*, saith he, *if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*, v. 31, 32. This was the end of that, a it is of all the judgments which God lays upon his people, even to bring them thereby to such a sight and sense of their sins, and to such a hearty and sincere repentance, that they may not be condemned for them. And therefore when the Apostle saith, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*: and again, afterwards, *If any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation*, v. 34, where the same word is used again in the original,

neither the etymology, nor common use of the word in other places, much less will the context here, suffer it to be understood of eternal *damnation*, but rather of such temporal judgments, which are designed by Almighty God to keep us from being condemned with the wicked and impenitent world.

Thus we see, in short, the whole scope and design of the Apostle in this remarkable passage concerning the holy sacrament. From whence we may easily observe, that all that can be reasonably inferred from what he here saith, is, that as it is a sin not to pray or fast, or give alms, or hear God's word aright, so it is a sin too not to receive the Lord's Supper aright, or as we ought to do it. But as we must *take heed how we hear*, Luke viii. 18, so we must take heed how we receive, that we may do it with that faith and reverence which becomes so divine an institution, and so heavenly a duty as that is, lest otherwise we offend God, and provoke him to lay some heavy judgment

upon us, and, except we repent, condemn us at last to everlasting fire, as he justly may, for any sin that we stand guilty of before him. But it is a great affront and abuse put upon God's holy word, to make this an excuse for our not frequenting the holy communion, when the Apostle designed it only for an argument, why we should receive it always in a worthy and decent manner. And therefore this is the great and only use we should make of it, that, seeing "he that eateth this bread, and drinketh this cup of the Lord unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body;" therefore, as oft as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we must take care to do it worthily discerning the Lord's body, and deporting ourselves accordingly in receiving of it. Whensoever we are invited to this spiritual wedding, we must be sure to come; but we must be sure to come with our *wedding-garment* on, with such a temper and disposition of mind as becomes the place, the

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company, and the feast we go to. For which purpose, we must prepare ourselves beforehand, and put our hearts into such a frame, that we may so feed upon the blessed body and blood of Christ our Saviour, that he may preserve both our souls and bodies to eternal life. But then you will say, perhaps, this requires a great deal of time, more than we can often spare from our necessary employments. And that is the reason that we do not receive so often as we otherwise would. And I believe so too. That is the reason, the great reason of all, that this holy sacrament is so shamefully neglected by most people ! They know it is a very good thing, and they would oftener partake of it, but that they have other business of greater consequence, as they wisely think, to mind ; so that they cannot find time enough to prepare themselves as they ought for it. As in the parable ; when a certain man had made a great supper, and sent his servants to call those which he had invited to it, they all pre-



sently began to make excuse : “ the first said to him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them ; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,” Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20. So it is to this day. Christ, the eternal Son of God, at the expense of his own blood, hath provided a supper, his own last supper, the best feast that can be had on this side heaven ; and all things being ready, he sends his ministers to invite all that are admitted into his church, to come and partake of it. But they all, or at least the far greatest part, desire to be excused. And if we would know the reason, it is because they have other business to do : one hath his farm to look after, another his shop, a third his warehouse and merchandize. And so every one finds something or other to do ; anything rather than come to the Lord’s Supper.



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But these are but vain excuses, like those in the parable, designed on purpose to show the folly of those which made them. "The first had bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it:" wherein he betrayed his folly, in buying that which he had not seen. And so did the second, in buying "five yoke of oxen" before he had proved them, to know whether they were fit for his turn. But the greatest fool of all was the last, who said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come:" as if marrying a wife could hinder him from coming to a feast. Such are the excuses that men commonly make for their not coming when they are invited to our Lord's table. They serve only to discover the weakness and folly of those which make them. For how can a man betray the weakness of his judgment more, than by preferring the most inconsiderable before the most valuable things that are? Yet this is the case of all who at any time neglect the holy communion for any worldly

business. They prefer their bodies before their souls : the world before their Saviour : earth, with all its vanities and troubles, before heaven, and all the glory that he is there preparing for all those who keep his commandments. For otherwise they would never suffer anything in this world to hinder them from doing what he hath commanded, for their more effectual obtaining eternal salvation by him.

But this being the most common objection against frequent communion, let us look a little more narrowly into it, that we may see what cause men have to make it. *First*, Some have none at all. Yea, there are many such : many who are not incumbered with the affairs of this life, having a sufficient maintenance transmitted to them from their ancestors, or else acquired already by God's blessings upon their own endeavors, whereby they are able to support themselves and their families, without taking any further care about it. I do not question but there are many such here present at this

time. Now what can you plead for your not frequenting the holy sacrament? you cannot say, ye have not time to prepare yourselves; for you have more upon your hands than ye well know what to do with. And therefore are often forced to invent ways how to spend it, which usually are as bad as to sit still and do nothing. And is it not a sad thing, that you should choose to do nothing, or worse than nothing, rather than that which God himself hath set you, and hath given you so much time, on purpose that nothing might divert you from it? Remember, the time will come, when time will be no more! and then you will wish with all your hearts, that you had employed it better while you had it. And I am sure there is no way possible for you to make better advantage of it, than by spending it in preparing yourself for the holy communion, and then receiving it accordingly. This being the best course you can ever take, for your employing not only that, but all the rest of your time well.

Whereas, if you still continue to neglect so great a duty, notwithstanding that you have little or nothing else to do in the mean while : for my part I know not how ye can answer it either to God or your own consciences, nor what account you can give either of yourselves or of your time at the last day ! But this I know, that you have but too much cause to suspect and fear that all is not right within you : that whatsoever your temporal estate may seem, your spiritual is very bad : and that all the ease and plenty which ye now enjoy, will hereafter serve to no other purpose, than to increase your pain and misery.

But there are others, who really have a great deal of worldly business upon their hands, more perhaps than they can well turn them to. But I would desire such to consider, that whatsoever worldly business they have, it is still but the business of this world, this transient and uncertain world that soon passeth away : that they have another world to live in

as well as this, a world that will have no end. And if they take so much care and pains about their living a few years, or perhaps a few days upon earth, they ought surely to be much more careful how to live eternally, as they must, either in heaven or hell, either in the greatest pleasure they can enjoy, or else in the greatest pain they can endure. The difference betwixt which two is so vastly great, that whosoever duly weighs and considers it, must needs be inclined to make it his chief study and business in this world, to prepare for the next : *to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, in the first place, as our Saviour himself commands, Matt. vi. 33. And he who doth that, will be sure to order all his temporal affairs so, that they shall never interfere with his spiritual, but give place to them upon all occasions. Although he be diligent and industrious in his calling, yet if things so fall out, that he must either neglect that for a while, or else his daily prayers, he doth not stand pausing which he

had best do ; as seeing there is no comparison at all between them, the one having respect only to his present, the other to his future and eternal state. And so for the holy sacrament. If he have an opportunity put into his hands of receiving that, he dares not let it slip upon any worldly account whatsoever. As knowing that he may get more there, than all this world is worth, and lose more by the neglect of that, than of any other opportunity that can be offered him.

This is the sense and practice of every wise and good man in this case. But as for such, whose heads and hearts as well as hands are so taken up with worldly business, that they cannot, or rather will not, spare so much time from that, as to prepare themselves for the holy communion, they plainly show that they prefer the things of this life, before their duty to God, their bodies before their souls, and their temporal before their eternal happiness and welfare. These are the men of this world, who have, or

at least desire to have their portion in this life rather than in the next. And these are they which *St. Paul* speaks of, where he saith, "many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 18, 19. I wish there were none such among us at this time. If there be, it will be in vain to say much to them, their hearts being so full of this world, that there is no room left for sober and good advice. And therefore I shall only desire, that when they are at leisure, they would remember our Saviour's words, "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matt. xvi. 26.

But some of those who thus live in a crowd of cares for this present life, may, notwithstanding, sometimes think of their future state, and



then they resolve to set upon the use of these means which God hath appointed for their salvation, and particularly the greatest of all, the holy sacrament, at least when their hurry of business is over, which they hope may be in a week or fortnight's time : but in the meanwhile, they desire to be excused.

Let us suppose, that you are so resolved at present. But are you sure that those resolutions will hold, and that you will be in the same mind a fortnight hence, that ye are now ? How do ye know but other business may come in before that, which may distract your thoughts as much or more than that ye have now upon you ? But above all, what assurance have ye that ye shall live so long ? And what if ye should die, as ye may, before that time ? What do ye think will then become of you ? If ye cannot fit yourselves for the only sacrament, will ye be fit to die ? No, surely ! if ye be not prepared to appear before Christ at his holy table, you will be much less prepared to ap-

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pear before him at his judgment seat, where you will receive your final and irrevocable sentence from him. And therefore you had need to look about you, and to be always ready, as Christ himself requires you to be, with his own mouth, saying, "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Luke xxi. 34. Whence you may observe, that he who will be your judge, hath forewarned you, that the cares of this life will make you as unfit to appear before him, as surfeiting and drunkenness itself. And therefore, if you have any care of your souls, take heed of the cares of this life, that they hinder you no longer from receiving his most blessed body and blood as often as ye can; for if they do, they will much more hinder you from giving a good account of yourselves before his tribunal. But as ye desire to be always ready for death and judgment, be always ready for that holy sacrament, which

is the best preparatory in the world for it. And for that purpose, whensoever ye are invited to our Lord's table, think thus with yourselves. I have now an opportunity put into my hands of partaking of the body and blood of my ever blessed Saviour, to preserve my body and soul to everlasting life. It is true, I have at this time more than ordinary business upon my hand; but what is all this world in comparison of everlasting life and happiness? And who knows whether I shall ever have such another opportunity as this as long as I live? Do but, I say, think thus, and then let slip any such opportunity if ye can: for my part, if ye have any regard for your immortal souls, I believe it will be very difficult, if not impossible.

But that which deserves most to be considered in this case, is the preparation that is necessarily required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper. Concerning which many whole books have been written, and some so large, that the very reading of them requires

more time, than a good Christian need spend in the duty itself. And this I believe hath discouraged many from receiving the holy sacrament so often as they ought, and as they otherwise would. For meeting with such books as make the preparation to it, so tedious and troublesome, that they cannot read and observe all that is there said about it, without laying aside all other business for a long time together, they are quite disheartened from ever attempting it, but when they can find a time wherein they have nothing else to do; which to those who follow any calling, as they ought, happens but very rarely: who therefore very rarely so much as think of it, especially if they chance to meet with such books, as they sometimes may do, which makes their preparation so nice and ticklish a thing, that they despair of ever observing all the little rules which are there laid down, and therefore seldom or never trouble their heads about it, which shows what great care and caution

should be used in treating upon this subject, lest we raise such scruples and difficulties in it, which may deter men from the holy sacrament, instead of preparing them for it. For my own part, I do not see but that whatsoever is generally necessary in order to it, may be brought within a small compass. For it may be all reduced to these few heads.

*First*, to the receiving the Lord's Supper aright; it is necessary that we be rightly instructed in the nature and end of it, that we may be able to *discern*, as the Apostle speaks, *the Lord's body*, or understand the difference between that and our ordinary food; and so know what we do; without which it is impossible for us to do it as we ought. But for this purpose we need not run over great volumes, for we have everything necessary to be known concerning it, briefly but fully set down in our *church catechism*; so briefly that a child may learn it all; and yet so fully, that the greatest scholar upon earth need know no more, in or-

der to his worthy receiving this holy sacrament. For there we have the end why it was ordained, even, *for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.* There we have both the parts of it described and explained to us, that *bread and wine which the Lord commanded to be received, is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper ;* and that the *inward part or thing signified, is the body and blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.* There we have also the *benefits* whereof we are *partakers* thereby, even, *the strengthening and refreshing our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine.* In which few words, we have all things necessary to be known concerning this holy sacrament, in order to the worthy receiving of it : and they are all so plain and easy, that we cannot suppose that any one who is bred up in the Christian religion, and is come



to the years of discretion, can be ignorant of them. And if any be, it is but turning to the catechism in their common prayer book, and there they may find them. As they may all things else that are requisite for them either to know or believe, or do, or desire, that they may be saved.

In the next place, as in all our addresses to Almighty God, so especially in this, we ought certainly to endeavor all we can, to prepare ourselves before-hand for it. For which purpose the Apostle lays down this general rule, "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup," 1 Cor. xi. 28. But he doth not tell us particularly what we should examine ourselves about, because that may be easily gathered from what he there saith concerning the sacrament itself, and the manner of receiving it. But lest we should be mistaken in it, our Church hath taken care to give us particular directions about it, in the last words of her catechism, where she

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tells us that it is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper, "to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and be in charity with all men." Which words are so plain, that they cannot be made plainer; and yet so full, that they contain all that can be truly and pertinently said upon this subject. If ye read all the books that have been written, and all the directions that are there given about your preparation to the Lord's Supper, you will find a great many more words, but all that are to the purpose, amount to no more than what is here said. I do not deny but that the reading of such or any other books of devotions that are written with that care and prudence which the subject requires, may be a good help to bring your minds into a fit temper and disposition for the blessed sacrament. But still this is the sum and substance

of all that you need to do in order to it, even to set apart some time before-hand wherein to *examine* yourselves, whether you *truly repent* of your former sins so as *steadfastly* to purpose for the future to *lead a new life*: whether you have a *lively faith* in God's mercies through Christ joined with a *thankful remembrance* of his death: and whether ye *be in charity* with all men. And if, upon due examination, ye find that ye have such *repentance*, such *faith*, and such *charity* as this is, which be sure all true Christians have, you need not doubt but that you are fit to receive the holy sacrament, and ought accordingly to do it. But that ye may be more fully assured of it, especially at the time of receiving, the church itself is pleased to tell you it in the exhortation at the same time, saying, "judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past, have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men.

So shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." And, therefore, she afterwards invites all that are so prepared to *draw near with faith*, and to *receive the holy sacrament to their comfort*.

This, therefore, is all that is necessarily required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper. But all this may be easily done by any true Christian. It requires no great parts or learning, nor time neither, for a man to look into his own heart, to review his life, to consider wherein he hath hitherto done amiss, and to resolve by God's blessing to do so no more, but to endeavor all he can to lead for the future a new and holy life, as becomes the gospel of Christ. This is no more than what many do every day, or at least very often, whether they are to receive the holy sacrament or no: and so are always ready, whensoever they can get an opportunity to receive it. Especially, if they have been long accustomed to it. For by this means, their *repentance, faith, charity,*

and all other graces, being kept in continual exercise, and receiving strength and nourishment from the body and blood of Christ frequently communicated unto them ; they by degrees grow up into habit and custom, so as to be ready upon all occasions to exert and put forth themselves with ease and pleasure. And, therefore, such happy persons need not spend much time in their actual preparation for the holy communion, as having such an habitual disposition, whereby they are always duly qualified and prepared for it. Insomuch, that if they happen to come into a place where it is administered, although they did not know or think of it before they came, yet they can receive the benefit and comfort of it, and bless God for giving them such an opportunity, which they did not look for, but being put in their hands, they cannot but take hold of it, and improve it to their best advantage.

These, I confess, may seem to be of the higher rank of Christians, to which few ascend

the ordinary way, without more than ordinary care and diligence in the use of those means, which, by the grace of God accompanying of them, lead up to it. But we must not think, as some have done, that none but such as these should receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper : for that was intended for all that believe in Christ, and are baptized in his name : yea, they are all commanded to do this in remembrance of him, one as well as another ; the weak as well as the strong in faith. The weak, that they may be strong : and the strong, that they may not be weak again, but rather grow stronger and stronger, till they " come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. I know there are many ignorant, though perhaps well-meaning persons among us, yea, and some who pretend to great knowledge in the mysteries of our religion, who yet think that none but great men and eminent saints should come to the holy sacrament ; they who have attained al-



ready to such an excellent and divine temper of mind, as to live always above this world, and out of the reach of the devil and his temptations: but as for others, who are conscious to themselves of their daily infirmities, and are often in danger of being overpowered by one temptation or other, they must by no means venture upon it. But this certainly is a very great and dangerous mistake, and one of the devil's tricks, to keep men off from using the best weapons, whereby to resist and conquer him. For all Christ's disciples are equally bound by his command to *do this in remembrance* of Him. And all have equally need of it. If any want it more than others, it must be such whose faith is so weak, as not to be able as yet to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, but are still wrestling and fighting with these their spiritual enemies, and therefore have need of all the aids and assistances which the Captain of our Salvation hath provided in that case: of which the receiving his most blessed body

and blood was always found to be the most powerful and prevalent.

But that it may be so to them, it is necessary that such persons take pains in preparing themselves for it. They must look back upon their lives, and bring to their remembrance as many as they can of their former sins, especially such as they have been most guilty of, and whereby they have most offended and dishonored Almighty God; and must not only abhor and humble themselves for them, but also resolve never to commit them any more. They must search narrowly into their own hearts, to find out the weakest side, and resolve to set a stronger watch and guard than they used to do about it. They must bethink themselves what sort of temptations they have been most subject to, and oftenest overcome by; and must resolve never to give way to them any more, but to withstand them with all their might. They must consider what place, what company, what employment, what recreations, or other circum-

stances of their life, have exposed them most to such temptations, and have been the chief occasions of their falling into sin, and must resolve for the future to forsake and avoid them. They must consult their own breasts, to know how they have performed their duties to God, and used the means that he hath appointed, for their obtaining grace at his hands: how they have fasted and watched: how they have prayed both in public and private; how they have read and heard God's holy word; and how they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper: whether they have lived in the neglect of some or other of these necessary duties, or else performed them in a careless and superficial manner; and must resolve to be more constant, and more hearty and sincere in all and every one of them, than hitherto they have been. They must examine themselves, whether they be in charity and in faith: whether they really believe all the articles of the Christian religion, and have a sure trust and

confidence in Christ their Saviour, and in all the promises which God hath made to mankind in him, and must resolve to continue firm and steadfast in the same unto the end. And they must make all these holy resolutions, not in their own, but in the name of Jesus Christ, believing and depending upon him for grace and power to perform them, so as to live accordingly for the future all the rest of their days. In short, they must call to mind the solemn vow and promise which they made to God when they were admitted into his Church by the sacrament of baptism, and must now renew and ratify the same at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, faithfully promising again to him, and purposing with themselves, by his assistance, to believe and do as they then promised, and to continue in the same unto their lives' end.

They who have thus prepared themselves for the Lord's Supper, whensoever it is administered, may, and ought, most thankfully to re-

ceive it, not doubting but they shall find favor and acceptance with God, and great benefit and advantage to themselves by it, through his merits and intercession, whose body and blood they there receive. And yet all this may be easily and soon done by any of Christ's disciples, by those of the lowest as well as of the highest forms in his school. Yea, it ought to be often done by all, at other times as well as when they are to receive the holy communion. It is true, it is in a particular manner requisite and necessary, that a man examine himself before he eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; because, unless a man first knows the true state of his soul, he will not know how to make the right use of what he there receives, to his spiritual advantage. The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is an universal remedy for all the distempers of our souls. But except a man knows where his distemper lies, and what part is most affected, he cannot apply the medicine to it, and so can receive no benefit from it. But,

howsoever, we must not think that self-examination is a duty to be performed only upon that occasion. For he who never examines himself, but only when he is to receive the holy sacrament, had need to receive it very often, or else he will be a great stranger to himself, not knowing what condition he is in, nor what progress he makes in the way to heaven : but rather will have just cause to suspect that he goes backward, and grows worse and worse every day. And, therefore, he who is really solicitous about his future state, as all true Christians be sure are, cannot but often reflect upon himself, and upon his present condition, although he have not an opportunity of partaking of Christ's body and blood, as yet to make it better. And if he lives in a place, as many do, where such opportunities are seldom to be had, he must, notwithstanding, often call himself to account, look into the state of his soul, and settle all his spiritual affairs, as solemnly as if he was to receive the holy sacrament imme-



diately upon it. By this means he will be always prepared for it, and always longing and thirsting after it, and ready to catch at the next opportunity he can get of receiving it. And in the meanwhile he may make a shift to keep up his mind in a pretty good temper, through the grace and mercy of God, who, knowing that it is not his own fault that he doth not actually receive the holy sacrament, will be graciously pleased, as we have good ground to believe, to make up the want of it some other way.

But, blessed be God for it, this is not our case, who may receive the holy communion every Lord's day in the year, and oftener too if we have a mind to it. How happy would some good people think themselves, if they could have such opportunities as these are! And how miserable shall we be if we neglect and slight them! For my part, I do not see how we shall be able to answer it either to God, or to ourselves another day. Neither do I know what excuse or pretence any can have

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for it, besides those which we have now refuted ; except it be this one, which some have made to themselves, even, that they have been several times at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but have not found that benefit and comfort from it which they expected, and, therefore, think it to no purpose for them to receive it oftener than they are obliged to do it, in order to their continuing in the communion of the Church.

This I know hath been a great stumbling-block to many well-meaning people, and therefore I shall endeavor to remove it out of the way as clearly as I can. For which purpose we may first observe, that what God commands us to do, we are therefore to do it, because he commands it, whether we can get anything by it or no. Otherwise we do it, not for his sake, but our own : not in obedience to his command, but in hopes of profit and advantage to ourselves ; whereby it ceaseth to be a good work, or any way acceptable to God, in that

we do not respect him, but ourselves ; and so prefer ourselves before him in it, as in our present case. We are commanded by God, our Saviour, to do this in remembrance of him. Now if we do it only in expectation of gaining something to ourselves by it, we do not regard or obey him at all in it ; in that we neither do it therefore because he commanded it, nor as he commanded it to be done. For he commanded it to be done in *remembrance of him* ; and so made that, not our profit, the chief end of his institution. And therefore although he hath commanded us nothing but what is really for our good, and that this is so in a high and special manner, yet we must not make that our end in doing it, but we must *eat this bread and drink this cup in remembrance of Him*, whether we receive any benefit from it or no ; yea, although we were sure to have none ; and so do it in pure and sincere obedience to his commandment. Which whosoever doth will be sure one time or other to find the benefit

and comfort of it, though not perhaps at present.

For the blessed body and blood of Christ received, as it ought to be, with a quick and lively faith, will most certainly have its desired effect. But it operates for the most part upon our souls, as ordinary food doth upon our bodies, insensibly and by degrees. We eat and drink every day, and by that means our bodies grow to their full stature, and are then kept in life, health and vigor, though we ourselves know not how this is done, nor perhaps take any notice of it. So it is with this our spiritual meat and drink, which God hath prepared for our souls. By eating and drinking frequently of it, we grow by degrees in grace, and in the *knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, and still continue steadfast and active in the true faith and fear of God, though, after all, we may be no way sensible how this wonderful effect is wrought in us, but only as we find it to be so by our own experience. And if we do that,

we have no cause to complain that we get nothing by it ; for we get more than all the world is worth, being strengthened in the inward man, and so made more fit for the service of God, more constant in it, and more able to perform it : or at least are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations, which otherwise we might be exposed to. And this surely is enough to make any one, that really minds the good of his soul, to hunger and thirst after this bread and water of life, and to *eat and drink* it as *often* as he can, although he do not presently feel the happy effect of it, as some have done, and as he himself sometimes may, when God seeth it necessary or convenient for him. In the meanwhile, he may rest satisfied in his mind, that he is in the way that Christ hath made to heaven, and thank God for giving him so many opportunities of partaking of Christ's body and blood, and also grace to lay hold of them, to improve them to his own unspeakable comfort, such as usual-

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ly attends the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper ; whereby we are not only put in mind of the great sacrifice which the Son of God offered for our sins, but likewise have it actually communicated unto us, for our pardon and reconciliation to the almighty governor of the world, which is the greatest comfort we can have on this side heaven ; so great, that we shall never be able to express it unto others, how deeply soever we may be affected with it in ourselves: And though we be not always thus sensibly cheered and refreshed with it, as we could wish to be ; howsoever, we can never receive the blessed sacrament, but we have the pleasure and satisfaction of having done our duty to our Maker and Redeemer, which far exceeds all the comforts of this life, and therefore may well stay our stomachs till God sees good to give us more.

But let us now suppose, that a man hath been often at our Lord's table, and yet hath seldom or never received any real benefit or



comfort from it, not so much as that which ariseth from our reflecting upon our having done what our Saviour commanded us. This, I confess, may be the case of some persons. But then such should consider where the fault lies. It cannot lie in the institution itself. That can never fail of producing the same effect, where it is duly observed, at one time as well as at another, and in one person as much as in another, and therefore the fault must be in the persons themselves; they do not duly observe the institution, and then it is no wonder if they be never the better for it. Now there are two things required to the due observance of it: *First*, that men come rightly prepared to the holy sacrament; and *then*, that they receive it aright. They who fail either of these ways, must blame themselves if they miss of what they expected from it. What is necessary to the preparing ourselves for it, I have already spoken of, and have shown, that it is no more than what may be easily done, if

men will but set themselves in good earnest about it. But if men will not do that, but come to the Lord's table as they do to their own, without putting themselves, by God's assistance, into a right temper and disposition for it, they have no ground to expect any advantage by it, for they are not subjects capable of those spiritual profits and pleasures which are there exhibited. Their hearts are not set towards them, but rather bent quite another way, and therefore cannot possibly be touched or affected by them. What wonderful power hath the sun upon plants and seeds in the earth, to make them grow and bring forth fruit! And yet such plants or seeds which are rotten, corrupted, or not rightly set and disposed as they ought to be, are never the better for the influences of the sun, but remain just as they were, how long soever it shines upon them. So it is here: Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shines most powerfully in his Church, especially at the commemoration of the great eclipse which

he once suffered, as they find by experience who come duly prepared to it, being so quickened, enlivened, actuated, and strengthened by it, that they bring forth *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith*, and all the other fruits of God's Holy Spirit, as they are reckoned up by his Apostles, Gal. v. 22, 23 ; whereas, they who are disordered and out of tune, and will not take pains to put themselves into a suitable temper and disposition for it, they are no way wrought upon, or influenced by it, but still continue barren and unfruitful. And so all must needs do who come not rightly qualified to the holy sacrament ; they cannot truly eat of the blessed body and blood of Christ, and if they did, they could not digest it into proper food and nourishment for their souls, and so can receive no real profit or advantage by it ; which, notwithstanding, should not discourage any from coming as oft as they can to the Lord's table, but should rather excite them to prepare themselves always as well as they can for it,

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for then they will never complain of unprofitableness any more. But let them come as often as they please, they will every time go home better than they came, if they do but come thus rightly disposed to receive the body and blood of Christ, which is there communicated to them, and then likewise receive it also as they ought.

How they ought to receive it, is the next question to be considered, and it had need be considered very seriously by all that expect any benefit from the Lord's Supper ; for, although they come with never so good a disposition to it, yet unless they keep themselves in the same, while they are at it, and actually partake of Christ's body and blood, according to his holy institution, their expectations will be all frustrated : for the great benefit which we receive from this holy sacrament is, *the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine.* But as our bodies cannot be

strengthened or refreshed by bread and wine, unless we eat and drink it, so neither can our souls be so by the body and blood of Christ, unless we actually partake of it. But our souls cannot actually partake of the body and blood of Christ, any other way than by some act of their own, even by acting their faith in what is there signified and represented to them. What we there see with our bodily eyes, although consecrated to a holy use, it is still in its own nature plain bread and wine, which may strengthen and refresh our bodies, but can have no such influence or effect upon our souls, as being of a quite different nature from them ; but, by faith, we look upon them as the signs and symbols of Christ's body and blood, and receive them as such upon his word, which, as I have shown, is a mighty strengthening and refreshing to our souls. But we can never thus receive Christ's body and blood, nor so much as discern it, any other way but by a quick and lively faith ; but that, as the

Apostle saith, "Is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. The body and blood of Christ is not seen in the holy sacrament, but faith doth plainly evidence, yea, itself is the evidence of it to us ; so that by faith I am as fully persuaded of it, as if I saw it. And although we do not see it there, yet we hope for it, because of Christ's word ; and what we thus hope for, our faith is the substance of it to us, causing it to subsist and operate in us as effectually, to all intents and purposes, as we can expect or desire, for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls. Whereas, without such a faith as this, we can receive nothing but bread and wine, and by consequence no spiritual benefit or comfort at all from the holy sacrament : and that is the reason why, according to the appointment of our Church, at the distribution of the sacramental bread, we say to every communicant, *Take, and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart*



*by faith* ; whereby every one is put in mind, in the very act of receiving, that he must there feed upon Christ *by faith*, as the only means whereby he can partake of his body and blood, so as to receive strength and nourishment to his soul from that holy feast.

For indeed the whole *stress* of this *great work* lies upon our *faith*. Unless that be duly exerted and acted, though men come to the Lord's table, and feed upon the outward elements, which are there given them, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper ; for that is a spiritual banquet, which cannot be so much as tasted of any otherwise than *by faith*, and therefore they who do not receive it with *faith*, have no cause to complain that they are never the better for receiving the Lord's Supper, for they do really receive it no more than as if they were not present where it is administered, and so can expect no more benefit from it, than from food or physic which they do not take. But this should not dishearten any from coming to the Lord's

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and reverence to Christ himself, whose gospel it is, and whose words and works they hear rehearsed; and therefore must needs stand up to hearken diligently to them, as they would have certainly done, if they had been near him when he spake or did them. And hence also it is, that in the first common-prayer book, which was put out by king *Edward* the Sixth, so soon as the minister had said, The holy gospel is written in such a chapter, the people were ordered to say, *Glory be to thee, O Lord*, to testify their acknowledgment, that he whose gospel they were now to hear is their Lord and Master, the great and Almighty God, that all glory and honor is due to him for revealing this gospel to them, and accordingly to adore and worship him for it. As all should do when they pronounce these words.

So soon as the gospel is read, the *Nicene* creed begins, which itself also contains the sum and substance of the gospel; and therefore is appointed to be said or sung by all the people,

standing in the same posture as they did in hearing of the 'gospel. And that, I suppose, is the reason why, although after the reading of the epistle, the minister is to say, *Here endeth the epistle*; yet, after the reading of the gospel, he is not to say, *Here endeth the gospel* (as many, who do not consider the rubric, are wont to do), because the gospel doth not properly end there, but continues to be declared and published in the following creed; in which are briefly comprehended all the great articles of that holy religion which Christ hath revealed to us in his gospel; and therefore it ought to be jointly repeated by all the people there present, that all may thereby publicly own and profess their belief of all and every one of those articles, and so of the whole gospel of Christ, in order to their being admitted to the holy communion; which otherwise they ought not to be.

After this creed, there follows one of the homilies, or sermons set forth by authority, or

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self, openly declaring and making known his laws particularly unto us, whereby our sins and infirmities are brought afresh to our remembrance, and we come to the holy sacrament with an actual sense of them upon our minds, and so are better able to apply the great remedy which is there prepared for our ease and cure. Upon which account I cannot but admire the prudence as well as piety of our Church, in appointing the commandments to be publicly read upon this occasion.

The commandments of Almighty God having been thus solemnly read to us, in obedience to them we first pray, as we are bound to do in every distinct service, for his vicegerent upon earth, and then for ourselves and brethren in the collect for the day, which, if it be a Holy-day, hath respect to the blessing we then commemorate, otherwise it is for some special grace or mercy that we have all need of.

After this follows the epistle, that is, some part of those epistles which St. Paul, or other

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Apostles, wrote by the inspiration of God, wherein we are usually reminded of some of those duties which we heard before enjoined us in the commandments, or upon some particular occasions, some other portions of Scripture relating to that occasion. Then follows the gospel, or some of the divine sayings, or acts of our blessed Saviour, as they are recorded by one of the four Evangelists, which never alters. There is never any other portion of Scripture appointed for the *gospel*, as there is for the *epistle*; but that is always taken out of the very gospel itself; by which means we always hear something which Christ himself spake with his divine mouth, for our instruction, when he was upon earth, or else something which he did, by his divine power, for the confirmation of our faith in him. Hence it is, that, at the reading of the gospel, the people are all required to stand up, not only to show their readiness to stand by and defend it to the last, but likewise to express their respect

which he himself composed, and left to his church as a standing general form, to be used by all persons, at all times and upon all occasions, to which it is fitted in such a wonderful manner, as sufficiently shows both the author and intent of it. To this is subjoined a short prayer, for this particular occasion, that God would be pleased to *cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name*, in keeping his commandments, which immediately after are so solemnly repeated in his name, by one of his ministers, standing at his table, that we may and ought to hearken to them with the same attention, reverence and godly fear, as if God himself pronounced them again to us, as he did to the *Israelites*, from Mount *Sinai*, with *thunderings* and *lightnings*, and the *noise* of the angelic trumpet sounding in our ears, *Exod. xx. 1, 18.* While we are thus hearkening to these divine laws, distinctly published and proclaimed to



every one of us in particular, we cannot but every one call to mind his own sins, whereby he hath offended against these laws, and how unable he hath been to keep any one of them as he ought, without the grace of God; and, therefore, we have no sooner heard any of them repeated, but we immediately beg of God mercifully to pardon our former transgressions of it, and to give us grace to observe it for the future, saying after the repetition of each commandment, from the bottom of our hearts, as well as with our mouth, *Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law*: all which must needs be acknowledged to be of great use to our due commemoration of that death, which the Son of God suffered for these our sins, and to our partaking of his body and blood for the pardon of them, and for grace to walk hereafter in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. For though we did not examine ourselves privately before, we do it again publicly, in the special presence of God him-

Supper as often as they can, but should make them more and more careful to receive it always as they ought, with *faith*; and then they can never fail of their expectations from it, but will always receive as much, and often more, than they could expect.

By this we may see, how we ought to receive the Lord's Supper: if we desire to partake of the benefits of it, we must receive it with *faith*. And hence it is, that our Church hath, in her great wisdom, so contrived that incomparable office which she hath made for the administration of this holy sacrament, that, from the beginning to the end of it, there is matter and occasion given us all along for the exercise of our faith in Christ, and the promises which God hath made us in him, that so we may be sure to partake of his most blessed body and blood, and of all the merits of his death, whenever we meet together for the celebration of it. Which that I may the better demonstrate, and likewise show how we should act our faith

all the while that we are at our Lord's table, so as to receive spiritual strength and comfort from it, it will not be amiss if we go through the whole office, especially so much of it as is, or ought to be, always used when there is a communion, and not at any other time. From the beginning of the service, to the end of the prayer for Christ's holy Catholic Church, is appointed to be read upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*, although there be no communion; but if there be a communion in the Church upon any other day, as well as those, it ought to be read. And, therefore, it will be expedient to premise something concerning that, at least so much, that we may understand the design of it, and how it makes way for our better performing of this great duty.

This service therefore being appointed for the communion of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as it is to be all and always read at his table, by one of his ministers, so it begins with his prayer—the prayer

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else one composed by the minister himself, for the fuller explication of some part of the said creed, or else of the commandments before repeated. Which, therefore, comes in very properly in this place, after the summary of that Christian doctrine, according to which all sermons ought to be framed. After sermon, the Priest returns to the Lord's table, and then begins the offertory, reading some sentences of holy scripture chosen out on purpose to excite and stir up the people to give, every one according to his ability, something to pious and charitable uses. And while these sentences are in reading, the deacons, church-wardens, or some fit persons appointed for that purpose, gather the alms and other devotions of the people, and bring them to the Priest, who humbly presents and placeth them upon the Lord's table, as devoted to him, and then begins the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth.

Thus much of the communion service, even

from the beginning of it, to the end of the fore-said prayer for Christ's catholic Church, is to be said upon *Sundays* and other Holy-days, although there be no communion, for want of a sufficient number to communicate with the Priest. In the first common-prayer book of king *Edward* the Sixth, it was ordered that the Priest, although there were none to communicate with him, shall say all things at the altar appointed to be said at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, until after the offertory, upon *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*, without any mention of *Sundays* and *Holy-days*. From whence it appears, that they took it for granted, that there would always be a sufficient number of communicants, upon every *Sunday* and *Holy-day* at the least, so that they could not so much as suppose there would be no communion upon any of those days. But it seems they feared that upon other days there might be sometimes none to communicate with the Priest, and so no communion. And therefore ordered, that

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if it should so happen for a whole week together, yet nevertheless upon the *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* in every week, so much shall be said of the communion service as is before limited. But afterwards, as piety grew colder and colder, the sacrament began to be more and more neglected, and by degrees quite laid aside upon the week days. And then the Church did not think it convenient to order any of the service appointed for it to be read upon any other days but only upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*. But upon those days she still requires, that, although there be no communion, yet all shall be said that is appointed at the communion until the end of the general prayer (for the good estate of the catholic Church of Christ), together with one or more of the collects at the end of the communion service, concluding with the blessing.

And verily there is great reason it should be so. Not only because it is fitting that our devotions should be longer upon those than they



are upon other days ; but likewise there are several things particular in that part of the service, which require it.

Here are the commandments of Almighty God, the supreme lawgiver of the world, which it is requisite that people should hear, and be put in mind of, at least upon those days which are dedicated to his service. Here is the collect, epistle, and gospel, proper to many *Sundays*, and to all the *Holy-days* in the year, without which they could not be distinguished from one another, nor from other days, nor by consequence celebrated, so as to answer the end of their institution, unless they were read upon their proper days. Here is the *Nicene* creed, wherein the divinity of our blessed Saviour is asserted and declared, and therefore very proper to be said or sung upon those days which are kept in memory of him, and of his Apostles, by whom that doctrine, together with our whole religion grounded upon it, was planted and propagated in the world. Here is the *of-*

*fertory* and choice sentences of scripture, read to stir up people to offer unto God something of what he hath given them, as their acknowledgment that he gives them all they have, and that they hold it all of him; which, howsoever it be now generally neglected, except there be a communion, yet people ought certainly to be put in mind of it at least upon all *Holy-days* and especially upon the Lord's own day, according to his own order, written by his Apostle *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. Here, among others, is the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth; and it is but reason that we, as fellow members of the same body should join together in it upon all the great festivals of the year, which are generally celebrated by the whole Church we pray for, and by that means testify our communion with it. And besides this, as well as the other part of the communion service, is performed at the communion table, the place where the primitive Church used to perform its public devo-

tions, and ours, which in all things else is conformable to that, cannot but imitate it in this particular at least, so far as to have some part of its service performed at the same place upon *Sundays* and *Holy-days*, although there be no communion.

But the main reason why so much of the communion service is ordered to be read upon *Sundays* and other *Holy-days*, notwithstanding that there is no communion, seems to be, that the Church may show her readiness to administer it upon these days, and so that it is not her's, nor the minister's, but the people's fault, if there be no communion. For the minister, by her order, goes up to the Lord's table, and there begins the service appointed for the communion, and goes on as far he can, till he come to the actual celebration of it, and if he stops there, it is only because there are none, or not a sufficient number of persons, to communicate with him; for if there were, he was bound and is ready to consecrate and administer it to them.

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And therefore if there be no communion upon any *Sunday* or *Holy-day* in the year, the people only are to be blamed, and must answer for it another day. The Church hath done her part in ordering it, and the minister his in observing that order : and if the people would do theirs too, the holy communion would be constantly celebrated in every parish church in *England*, every *Sunday* and *Holy-day* throughout the year. Neither can they plead ignorance in the case, or say they did not think it to be their duty to communicate so often. For every time they see the minister go up to the communion table, and there read part of the service appointed for the holy communion, they are put in mind of their duty, and upbraided with their neglect of it. From all which we may observe by the way, how much those ministers are to be blamed, who ever omit this part of the service, or do not perform it at the place appointed for it. How they can answer it to God, to the Church, to their

people, or to themselves, for my part I know not.

Having thus briefly run over so much of the communion service as is to be read when there is no communion, as well as when there is, we are now come to that part of it, which never is, nor can be used, but only when the holy communion is actually administered; and therefore is chiefly to be considered in our present design, of showing how we may and ought to receive it, so as to find the benefit and comfort of it. For which purpose we may observe, that after the prayer for Christ's holy catholic Church before mentioned, the minister, who is always *a priest*, seeing a competent number of devout Christians ready and desirous to partake of the body and blood of our blessed Redeemer, first reads to them a grave, pious, and pathetic exhortation, to consider what they are about to do, of how great benefit it will be to them, if *with a true, penitent heart, and lively faith, they receive that holy sacrament*: how

dangerous to receive the same unworthily ; how they should come to it ; what cause they have to give their most hearty thanks to the most Holy Trinity, for the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, who ordained these holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for the continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort. All which is so clearly and affectionately expressed, that it contributes very much to the making up the defects of their preparation for it, and to raise their minds into such an holy and devout temper, as to be capable both of performing this great duty aright, and of receiving the benefits and comforts of it.

The exhortation being ended, the minister (in the name of Christ and his Church) inviteth all who are thus godly disposed, to the Lord's Supper, saying to them, *draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.* He invites them first to *draw near*, thereby putting them in mind, that they are now invited into Christ's more special presence, to sit down



with him at his own table, that so they may be as near him as they can be in this world, and therefore, as an emblem thereof, should come from the more remote parts of the church, as near to the said table as they may. But then he adviseth them to draw near *with faith*, as without which all their bodily approaches will avail them nothing, it being only *by faith* that they can really draw near to Christ, and take this holy sacrament to their comfort. And therefore they should take special notice of this expression, used on purpose in this place, to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, to keep their *faith* in continual exercise all the while that they are at our Lord's table, so as to look upon him as there present with them, observing all the motions both of their souls and bodies, and ready to communicate his own most blessed body and blood unto them, to preserve their souls and bodies to everlasting life. But seeing they cannot act their faith as they ought in Christ, who died for their sins,

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until they have confessed and repented of them; therefore he calls upon them to make their humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon their knees.

And now all that are to communicate, being prostrate upon their knees, as so many guilty malefactors before the judge of the whole world, do in a most humble and solemn manner jointly *acknowledge and bewail the manifold sins and wickedness which they from time to time have committed in thought, word, and deed, against his divine majesty.* Professing themselves *most earnestly to repent of them,* humbly beseeching him to pardon what is past, and to grant them grace for the future to *serve and please him in newness of life,* for Christ Jesus' sake. All which is done with such apposite and pathetic words, that I do not see how it is possible for us to express our hearty and sincere repentance better than we do at that time.

While the people continue in this humble posture, begging for mercy and grace at the hands

of God, his minister stands up, and in his name assures them, that he of his infinite mercy *hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him*, and therefore he applies the said promises to all, and every one there present, praying that Almighty God would accordingly *have mercy upon them, pardon and deliver them from all their sins, confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and bring them to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And here it is that our *faith* must begin to work, as it is the *substance of things hoped for*, or a solid and substantial confidence that God will give us all the good things which he hath promised, and we therefore hope for at his hands, so as firmly and steadfastly to believe that, upon our hearty and sincere repentance, we are now absolved from all our former sins, and that from this time forward, God will assist us with his grace to serve and please him, according to the prayers we have now put up to him, and the

promises which he hath made to us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For all the benefit of absolution, as pronounced by the minister, depends wholly upon this, our believing in the promises and word of God, upon which it is grounded.

Which therefore that we may do, the minister presently reads some select sentences of the holy scriptures, wherein God hath promised, or declared, his willingness to pardon and absolve us from our sins in the blood of his Son, that so we may act our faith accordingly upon them. And therefore he calls upon the people to hear, and take special notice of them.

As first, those comfortable words which our Saviour saith, to all that truly turn to him, *Come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you*, Matt. xi. 28. Which words contain so firm and solid a foundation, whereupon to build our most holy faith, that if we be but truly penitent, we cannot doubt of God's mercy to us. For here his only Son with his

own divine mouth invites all that are so to come to him, promising or engaging in his word, that he will refresh them. He will give them peace in their minds, quiet in their consciences, and rest to their souls. He will take care that they shall neither travail, nor be heavy laden any longer with the burden of their sins. For he will refresh them with the sense of God's mercy, in the pardon of all their faults, and with the assistance of his grace, in the mortifying of all their lusts. *Sin shall no longer have dominion over them, because they are not now under the law, but under his grace, Rom. vi. 14.*

Now these being the words of Christ, of truth itself, we may, and ought to have a sure trust and confidence on them. So as to be fully persuaded in our minds, that we being in the number of those whom he calls, and having obeyed his call in coming to him, he, according to his word, will ease us of our sins, and give us rest. Especially considering that he himself assures us also with his own mouth, that *God so loved*

*the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him might not perish but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16. Which words, containing the substance of the design of the whole gospel, pronounced by Christ himself, are therefore read in the next place, that we might have occasion to exercise our faith in all of it, and so have no place left for diffidence or doubting. For seeing the great reason that moved God to send his Son, was his infinite love to mankind, and the only end why he did it, was, *That all who believe in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life*: what can we desire more to excite and confirm our faith in him! For, “he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Rom. viii. 32.

But lest the sense of our former sins should be apt to make us despond or despair of mercy, that nothing may be wanting to complete and strengthen our faith at this time, there are two



other divine sentences read, the one of *St. Paul*, saying, "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. And the other of *St. John*; "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 1. Whereby we are given to understand and believe, that Christ came into the world on purpose to save such sinners as we are, that he was made a propitiation for our sins, by undergoing all the punishments that were due unto us for them; and that he is now our Advocate in heaven, always interceding for us, and ready to apply the merits of his death unto us. At the hearing of which our faith hath so much ground and matter to work upon, that we may well say with *St. Paul*, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen

again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 33, &c.

Having thus exercised our *faith*, and so got above this world, we are now ready to go into the other, and to join with the glorified saints and angels in praising and adoring that God, who hath done so great things for us. Which that we may the better do, the minister calls upon us to *lift up our hearts*, to lift them up as high as we can, by a quick and lively *faith* in the most high God, the supreme governor of the whole world. Which being now ready to do, we immediately answer, *We lift them up unto the Lord*. And our hearts being now all lift up together, and so in a right posture to celebrate the high praises of God, the minister invites all to join with him in doing it, so as at the same time to believe that he is our Lord and our God, saying, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God;" which the people having consented to, and approved of, by saying, "It is

meet and right so to do," he turns himself to the Lord's table, and acknowledgeth to his Divine Majesty there specially present, that "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks to him." And then the minister, looking upon himself and the rest of the communicants as members of the Church triumphant, and all apprehending themselves, by *faith*, as in the midst of that blessed society, we join with them in singing forth the praises of the most high God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, saying, "Therefore with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord, most high." And certainly, if ever our souls be in heaven, while our bodies are upon earth, it must be in the singing of this heavenly anthem, when our spirits, "with those of just men made

perfect," yea, with the whole company of heaven, in so solemn and seraphic a manner, adore and magnify the eternal God, our Maker and Redeemer. Especially when we celebrate the *nativity*, the *resurrection*, and *ascension* of our blessed Lord, his *mission of the Holy Ghost*, or the most glorious *Trinity*, for which there are proper prefaces appointed to raise up our hearts as high as possible, in praising God for such transcendent mysteries and mercies as those are.

Now, if ever, our minds must needs be duly prepared to receive the blessed body and blood of our dear Lord. And therefore the minister, having first acknowledged our unworthiness of so great a mercy, and prayed to God to assist with his own grace to receive it worthily, he then saith the *Prayer of Consecration*.

And now there is nothing either seen, or said, or done, but what puts us in mind of something or other, whereupon to employ and exercise our faith in the highest manner that we can.

When we see the *bread* and *wine* set apart *for consecration*, it minds us of God's eternal purpose and determinate counsel, to offer up his Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The minister's *reading* the *prayer of consecration*, and performing that whole work alone, none of the people speaking a word, or any way assisting him in it, may put us in mind how *the* whole work of our salvation was accomplished by Christ alone, no mere creature contributing anything at all towards it; and, therefore, we should believe in him as our only mediator and advocate.

When we hear those words, *Who in the same night that he was betrayed took bread*, we are then by *faith* to behold our Lord at his last supper, there instituting this sacrament which we are now to receive, and distributing it to his Apostles with his own most blessed hands.

When we see the *bread broken*, we should then call to mind that grief and pain, those bitter agonies and passions, which the eternal Son

of God suffered for our sins, and in our stead. How *he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities* : how his blessed body was broken, his hands and his feet fastened to the cross, with nails drove through them, and all for our sins, even for ours.

And so when the minister takes the *cup* into his hands, or *pours out the wine*, we are then by *faith* to behold how fast the blood trickled down from our dear Lord and Saviour's head when crowned with thorns, from his hands and feet when nailed to the cross, from his side when pierced with the spear, and from his whole body when he was in his agony, and all to wash away our sins : still believing that it was for our sins that all his precious blood was shed : for such and such sins, which we know, every one ourselves to have been guilty of.

When we hear the *words of consecration* repeated, as they came from our Lord's own mouth, *this is my body which is given for you, and this is my blood which is shed for you, and for*



*many, for the remission of sins*, we are then steadfastly to believe, that although the substance of the *bread* and *wine* still remain, yet now it is not common bread and wine as to its use, but the body and blood of Christ in that sacramental sense, wherein he spake the words ; insomuch, that whosoever duly receives these his creatures of bread and wine, according to Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, are partakers of his most precious body and blood, as it is expressed in the prayer of consecration.

When we see the minister *distributing* the *sacramental bread* and *wine* to the several communicants, we are then by *faith* to look upon our Lord as offering his blessed body and blood, and all the benefits of his death, to all that will receive them at his hands. Entertaining ourselves all the while others are receiving, with these or such like meditations, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world ! Behold the Son of God, the only be-

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gotten of the Father, who loved us, and gave himself for us! Who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree, and washed us from them in his own blood. See how willing and ready he is to communicate the blessings he hath thereby purchased! How desirous that all would partake of them! Methinks I hear him crying out, "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Methinks I see him yonder going about by his minister, from one to another, and offering his most blessed body and blood, with all the merits of his most precious death, to all that will receive them faithfully. Happy, thrice happy, are they who do so! They are absolved from all their sins, and accounted righteous before God. They are delivered from the wrath to come, by the blood of the Lamb, as the *Israelites* were by that, which was typically sprinkled upon their door posts. They are reconciled to the great Creator and Governor of all things, and are made his children by adop-

tion and grace. They are always safe and secure under his care and protection, and never want anything that is really good for them. They have his Son always interceding for them, and his Spirit always abiding with them, to direct and assist them in what they do. "They are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11 : and therefore they will be glorified with him for ever. O that I might be in the number of those blessed souls ! When will it once be ? When will my Lord and Saviour come to me, that I also may partake of his most blessed body and blood ? My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready to receive it. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Thus we may employ our thoughts, while others are receiving ; but when it comes to our turn to receive it, then we are to lay aside all thoughts of bread, and wine, and minister, and

everything else that is or can be seen, and fix our faith, as it is the evidence of things not seen, wholly and solely upon our blessed Saviour, as offering us his own body and blood, to preserve our bodies and souls to everlasting life, which we are therefore to receive by faith, as it is the substance of things hoped for, steadfastly believing it to be, as our Saviour said, "his body and blood, which," as our Church teacheth us, "are verily, and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." By which means, whatsoever it is to others, it will be to us who receive it with such a faith, the body and blood of Christ our Saviour, the very "substance of all things hoped for," upon the account of his body that was broken, and his blood that was shed for us.

And the better to excite and assist us in the exercise of our faith after this manner, at our receiving this holy sacrament, the minister, at the distribution of it, first applies the merits of Christ's death to each particular person that re-

ceives it, saying to every one singly, and by himself, “the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for THEE, and the blood which was shed for THEE, preserve thy body and soul to everlasting life, that so I may apply and appropriate it to myself as the body and blood of him that loved ME, and gave himself for ME, to preserve MY body and MY soul to everlasting life.” And then he adds, at the distribution of the bread, “take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for THEE, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.” Whereby I am put in mind again to eat it in remembrance that Christ died for ME in particular, and then am taught how to feed upon him, even *in my heart, by faith, with thanksgiving.* In my heart, because it is not bodily but spiritual food : by *faith*, as the only means whereby the heart or soul can take in its proper nourishment, and receive the substance of things hoped for, even the body and blood of Christ ; and then it must be with *thanksgiving* too, as the necessary con-

sequent of faith. For as no man can be truly thankful to Christ, unless he actually believe in him; so no man can actually believe in him, but he must needs be truly thankful both to and for him. And therefore at the distribution of the cup, after the words, "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee," it is only added, *And be thou thankful*. Because this necessarily supposeth and implieth our *feeding upon* him in our hearts by *faith*, as without which it is impossible for us to be truly thankful.

Hence also it is that our Church requires us to receive the holy sacrament *kneeling*, not out of any *respect* to the creatures of *bread* and *wine*, but to put us in mind that Almighty God, our Creator and Redeemer, the only object of all religious worship, is there specially present, offering his own body and blood to us, that so we may act our faith in him, and express our sense of his goodness to us, and our unworthiness of it, in the most humble posture that we can. And, indeed, could the Church be sure that all



her members would receive, as they ought, with faith, she need not command them to receive it kneeling. For they could not do it any other way. For how can I pray in faith to Almighty God, to preserve both my body and soul to everlasting life, and not make my body as well as soul bow down before him? How can I by faith behold my Saviour coming to me, and offering me his own body and blood, and not fall down and worship him! How can I by faith lay hold upon the pardon of my sins, as there sealed and delivered to me, and receive it any otherwise than upon my knees? I dare not, I cannot do it! And they who can, have too much cause to suspect that they do not discern the Lord's body, and therefore cannot receive it worthily. Be sure our receiving the blessed body and blood of Christ, as the catholic Church always did, in an humble and adoring posture, is both an argument and excitement of our faith in him. By it we demonstrate, that we *discern the Lord's body*, and believe him to be present with

us in a peculiar sacramental sense. And by it we excite and stir up both ourselves and others to act our faith more steadfastly upon him, in that, by our adoring him, we actually acknowledge him to be God as well as man; and therefore on whom we have all the reason in the world to believe and trust on for our salvation.

When we have thus spiritually eaten the flesh of Christ, and drunk his blood, then we are firmly to believe, and rest fully satisfied in our minds, that according to his own word, *Christ now dwelleth in us, and we in him; that Christ is one with us, and we with him.* And, therefore, that God hath now sealed to us the pardon of our sins in his blood, and will enable us for the future to walk in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. Which faith, together with our thankfulness for so great a mercy, we ought to exercise all the while that the rest of the communicants are receiving, not suffering our thoughts to wander up and down, but keeping them as close as we

can to the work, still ruminating upon that spiritual food which we have eaten, after this or the like manner :

“ Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,” Psal. ciii. 1, 2. “ Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song : he also is become my salvation,” Isa. xii. 2. He himself by the one oblation of himself, *once offered*, hath made a *full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world* : and he hath now given me a share in it. For he hath communicated unto me that *body and blood* wherewith he did it, and hath *assured* me thereby of his *favor and goodness towards* me, in the *pardon* of all my sins, and that I am a *member* incorporate in his *mystical body*, and an *heir* through *hope*, of that *everlasting kingdom*

which he hath purchased with his own blood. *What shall I render unto the Lord for these his most inestimable benefits? I will offer and present myself, my soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto him. I will believe in him, I will trust in him, I will love and honor him with all my heart and soul: I will spend the rest of my days wholly in his service, and to his glory. I will order all my conversation as becometh his gospel; I will crucify the flesh; I will resist the devil: I will keep myself unspotted from the world: I will abstain from all appearance of evil, and do all such good works as he hath prepared for me to walk in. For his grace shall be sufficient for me, his strength shall be made perfect in my weakness; his power shall rest upon me, his Holy Spirit shall abide continually with me, and in me, to direct, sanctify and govern both my heart and body in the ways of his laws, and in the works of his commandments, so that now, through his most mighty protection, I shall be preserved both in soul and*

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*body to everlasting life, Amen. Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power be unto the Lord our God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

Now when all have communicated, with the same humble confidence, we jointly address ourselves to Almighty God, as our heavenly Father, in that divine form of prayer, which he whose body and blood we have now received, was pleased to compose, and require us to use upon all occasions. After which, having added another prayer proper for this great and solemn occasion, we join together in singing or saying in that incomparable hymn, *Glory be to God on high, &c.* The first part whereof was sung by the choir of heaven at our Lord's nativity, and the rest added by the primitive, if not by the apostolic Church, it being the most ancient hymn that we know of, and that which hath been generally used both by *Greek and Latin Churches* all along from the beginning of Christianity. And this is the most proper place for

it, now that our hearts are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, and so ready to sing and give praise in the best manner that we can ever do it upon earth. But for that purpose it will be necessary to keep our minds all the while intent, and our faith still fixed upon God the Father Almighty, and upon his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to whom we here speak in a particular manner, and therefore should look upon him as specially present with us, hearing what we say to him, and observing how earnestly we beseech him, the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, *who taketh away the sins of the world*, to have mercy upon us, and how heartily we adore and magnify his divine holiness, his absolute dominion over the whole world, and His, together with the Holy Spirit's, infinite height in the glory of the Father.

After all which duly performed, having prayed for God's acceptance of what we have done, and for his blessing upon us, we are according-



ly dismissed, as well we may, with *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*, and with the *blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, which will most certainly be and remain with those who thus receive the holy communion always.

I have now gone over the whole communion service, taking notice, by the way, of such things only as are plain and obvious in the several parts of it; from whence it is easy to observe, that it is all contrived so as to set before us continual matter for our faith to work upon, before as well as at the receiving the holy sacrament; that our faith having been kept so long in exercise upon our blessed Saviour beforehand, it may be more ready to be fixed upon him in the actual receiving the holy communion, so as that we may partake of his most blessed body and blood, which otherwise we could not; for without our faith, as it is impossible to please God, so it is impossible to partake of Christ. And therefore not only infidels,

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who have no faith at all, but they also who have faith, unless they use it at the holy sacrament, they can only receive the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper ; they cannot possibly partake of his body and blood signified by it, for that cannot be so much as discerned, much less received any other way than by faith. And that is the reason why so many go from the holy sacrament no better than they came to it ; because, while they are there, they either stare about them, or think of other things ; at least they do not keep their minds and faith intent upon the work they are about. They feed only upon the *bread* and *wine* with their mouths, they do not feed upon Christ in their hearts by faith, and therefore cannot possibly receive any spiritual strength or refreshment from him. Whereas, if whilst they are eating and drinking the outward elements, they would at the same time lift up their hearts, and fix their faith upon that which is signified and represented by them, their souls would be

much more strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, than their bodies are by the bread and wine.

From hence it appears, both how little reason any can have to plead their unprofitableness under it, as an argument for their not frequenting the holy sacrament; and likewise, how we may receive it so as to be always the better for it. But for that purpose it is requisite that we do it often; for the oftener we do it, the more expert we shall be at it, and the more benefit and comfort we shall receive from it. It is very difficult, if not impossible, for these who do it only now and then (as once or twice a year), ever to do it as they ought; for every time they come to it, they must begin as it were again; all the impressions which were made upon their minds at the last sacrament being worn out before the next; and it being a thing they are not accustomed to, they are as much to seek how to do it now as if they had never done it before. It is by frequent acts

that habits are produced. It is by often eating and drinking this spiritual food, that we learn how to do it, so as to digest and convert it into proper nourishment for our souls. And therefore I do not wonder that they who do it seldom, never do it as they ought, nor by consequence get any good by it: I should rather wonder if they did. But let any man do it often, and always according to the divine directions before laid down, and my life for his, he shall never lose his labor, but whether he perceives it or not, he will grow in grace, and gather spiritual strength every time more and more.

If such considerations as these will not prevail upon men, to lay aside their little excuses for the neglect of so great a duty, and to resolve for the future upon the more constant performance of it; for my part I know not what will: and therefore shall say no more, but that I never expect to see our Church settled, primitive Christianity revived, and true piety and virtue flourish

again among us, till the holy communion be oftener celebrated, than it hath been of late, in all places of the kingdom ; and am sure, that if people were but sensible of the great advantage it would be to them, they would need no other arguments to persuade them to frequent it as often as they can : for we should soon find, as many have done already, by experience, that this is the great means appointed by our ever blessed Redeemer whereby to communicate himself and all the merits of his most precious death and passions to us, for the pardon of all our sins, and for the *purging of our consciences from dead works to serve the living God* ;—so that by applying ourselves thus constantly unto him, we may receive constant supplies of grace and power from him to live in his true faith and fear all our days ; and by conversing so frequently with him at his holy table upon earth, we shall be always fit and ready to go to him, and to converse perpetually with him in his kingdom above, where we shall have no more need of sacraments, but

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shall see him face to face, and adore and praise him for ever, as for all his other blessings, so particularly for the many opportunities he hath given us of partaking of his most blessed body and blood.

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